

Fifth estate

Winter 2020

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**We Won't
Back Down!**



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YES TO PORN

In the Summer 2019 Fifth Estate, a comrade wrote that he uses pornography to satisfy his sexual desires being unable to find a female partner. I do as well—very often—and enjoy sexual stimulation in watching porn. Although I don't share with this writer never having had a sexual relationship, I've experienced prolonged periods of celibacy.

I've been an outcast for much of my adulthood, partly by choice. I never go out to clubs or bars and enjoy marijuana more than alcohol. Also, I am a schizophrenic, if you consider such psychiatric labels legitimate. I became very introverted at the age of twenty-two and sank deep into studying. I read way more books over those next four years, but later found that this deep introversion became a sexual demarcation against me.

As anarchists we must not accept that sexuality be normalized in any way. Sexual divergences of any form are the alternative to chauvinistic tendencies of dominant males. The writer whose letter addressed this issue is a commendable anarchist and comrade.

We can learn from him to be more accepting of the challenges facing many people who struggle with their sexual identity—whether defined as fat, introverted, transgender, gay, straight edge, introverted or otherwise. Chauvinism creates sexual repression and we can all undue this repression by being more open minded to a broader range of people's sexual identities.

Free love!

Matti Salminen
Milton, Vermont

Fifth Estate reply: Whatever one thinks about pornography, it is an immense industry. If you Google "free porn," endless links to web sites appear. There are three in the top most visited sites in North America.



LETTERS

Send letters to fe@fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220

All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten.

Letters may be edited for length

The most prominent one, Pornhub, boasts having over nine million videos on their site although looking at an entry for it on Wikipedia shows there have been incidents of malvertising on their site placing malware on users' computer, so visiting is at the visitor's risk.

However, it doesn't scare off the more than 60 million visitors a day to their site. It is so corporate that the Montreal-based company now has offices and servers in San Francisco, Houston, New Orleans and London.

It's hard to gauge the cultural and interpersonal effect the proliferation of pornography has on the issues of sexuality and patriarchy we grapple with. As the letter writer above states, agreeing with original message, sexualized media provides a short-term solution to their lack of fulfillment. However, there is the question of content. Does pornography bolster the patriarchy or simply reflect the patriarchal dominance of everyday life?

As boundaries of what can be shown have disappeared, pornography has become mainstream and less an area of hidden shame. Pornhub recently announced that Bella Thorne, a former Disney child star, will direct a porn

film as part of the company's Visionaries Director's Series, featuring "debut

films by unexpected

guest directors to diversify porn production and help create more varied content with multiple types of viewers in mind."

Concern about the pornography is nothing new, but its ubiquitous availability and mainstream acceptance is. In 19th century

Victorian England, authorities exerted a great amount of police effort in the suppression of pornography which was extremely widespread.

Then, it was often considered rebellion against the stultifying and repressive sexuality demanded by the ruling cultural order. Now, is it Marcuse's repressive desublimation, an ally of patriarchy and the objectification of women, or a harmless outlet for those denied direct expression of sexuality?

Perhaps all.

NO FE ON MY PHONE

I recently read your Winter 2019 edition cover to cover. Excellent work!

I read in your reply to a letter writer that you are committed to continuing publishing a print edition. As an avowed atheist, I say, God, bless you!

I don't want to read the FE on my phone or a computer screen. I don't own a computer and don't want one. I read real books, magazines, and newspapers.

I don't know where I stand with my subscription, but extend it for two years and accept a small donation to the cause.

A reader

FE reply: Thank you for your support and appreciation. It is only through subscriptions and donations such as yours that this publication has lasted 55 years. We have an online presence

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About This Issue

Welcome to our Winter 2020 edition. Although there is no specific theme this issue, the totality of our articles affirms a longstanding commitment to the philosophy of anarchism that is now an existential necessity given the political and environmental crises the world faces. Can a body of ideas, considered impractical by many, and ignored by most, rise to the point where it is powerful enough to challenge centuries old modes of hierarchal rule and ecological destruction? Tinkering within the system for minor changes only increases the possibility of catastrophe. We have work to do!

Thanks To All Who Made This Issue Possible

This includes dozens of active participants who produced this issue including writers, artists, and photographers, but also those who did editing, designing, and proofreading. When we include subscribers, distributors (info shops, free distro, and bookstores), and readers, the numbers reach into the thousands.

About The Cover

Staring in the face of authority during protests in Santiago, Sept. 11 marking 43 years since a U.S.-backed bloody military coup resulted in President Salvador Allende being overthrown, killed, and replaced with a military dictator led by dictator Augusto Pinochet. Protesters honored the regime's thousands of victims of torture and execution during its 17 years in power.

Call For Submissions: Spring 2020 Fifth Estate

Theme: Justice

What is justice? What do we mean and what do we want this word to represent? Is justice only a concept within the state and hierarchical society? What might justice look like in a society beyond and without the state? Is there justice within personal relationships?

Your ideas for essays, analytical and anecdotal, news articles, fiction, and poetry are welcome. Submit manuscripts for short pieces and proposals for longer essays, along with art, graphics, and photographs to: fe@fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, PO Box 201016, Ferndale, MI 48220

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The Logic of the Telescope

Against the wisdom of Hawaii's Native People

STEVE KIRK

Last July, the so-called United States celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing while another fascination with space was playing out badly. It was with zero irony that the supposed "giant leap for mankind" was recognized while the Kanaka Maoli people of Hawaii's struggle to prevent a promised miracle of science from desecrating their land was ignored.

Colonial reality unfortunately continues on Hawaii. However, there is resistance as the newest iteration of progress attempts construction of a Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), the world's largest visible-light instrument, on the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea. Blockades by Native resisters, a resurgent and important tactic, are being used against infrastructure projects such as pipelines across the United States and so-called Canada. The physical closing of roads to halt the TMT began in 2014, was reinvigorated this year, and are continuing at the time of this writing for over 90 days. The cops have used sonic weapons and mass arrests to clear the access road to allow construction to begin but the resistance is solid.

The recent campaign against the construction of the TMT utilizing blockades and demonstrations did not begin in 2009 when elite technocrats concluded that the dormant volcano was the ideal site. This struggle stretches back to the 1960s when the first of a series of telescopes were constructed on the mountain by the University of Hawaii. Throughout the

1980s, Native Hawaiians were arrested defending the mountain, which rises 33,000 feet from the sea floor, and some of the same resisters have been arrested again in 2019 during the most recent campaign.

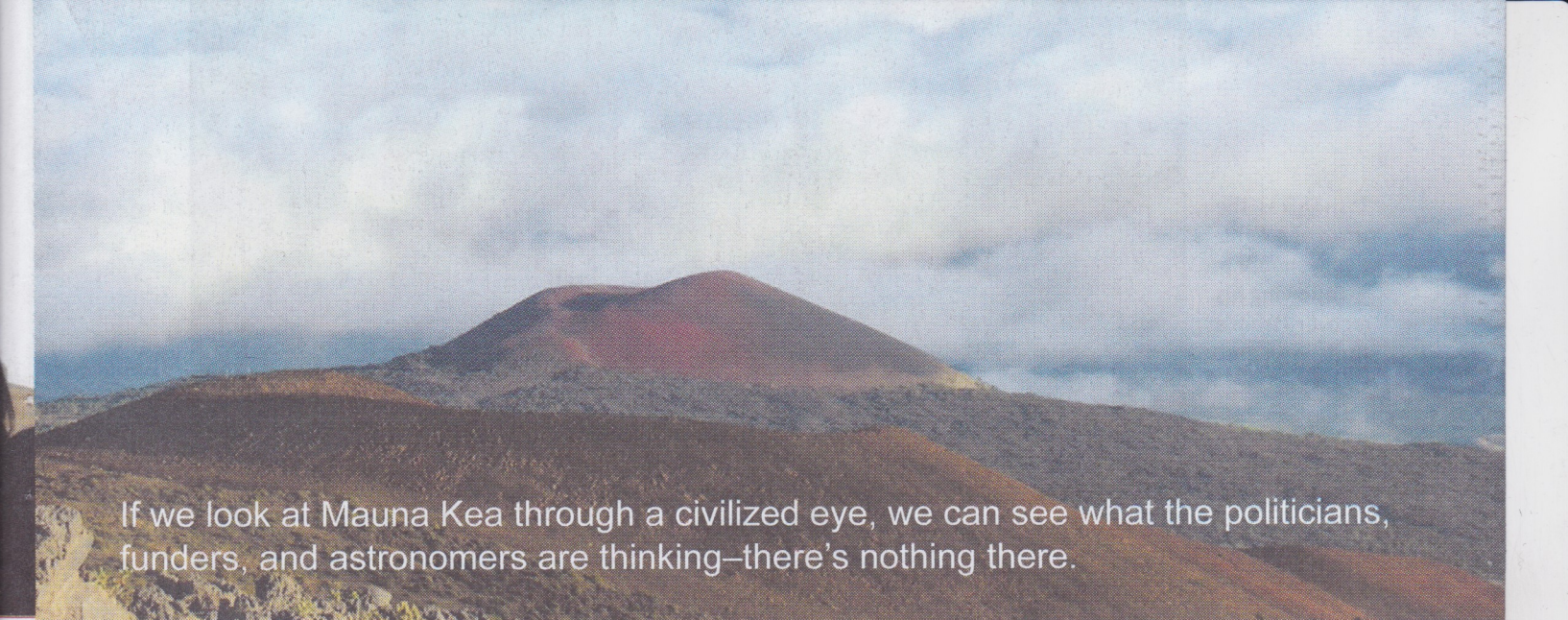
In typical colonial fashion, the needs and experiences of Native Hawaiians were considered but a nuisance, an unfortunate speedbump in the way of an inevitable march of scientific progress.

It seems absurd to have to write this while humanity is in such turmoil—climate change, worldwide political chaos, global power polarization, increased fascist rhetoric, the vanishing of wild areas—that there's a need to fight a telescope. The absurdity comes not from the nature of the struggle, but from the audacity of our techno-elite and their unshakable pathology of control.

The fascination with the beyond, the eternal frontier of knowledge which constitutes so much of the thrust and momentum of civilization, is at work to crush the barriers and blockades which stand against this continued scientific assault. The narrative of all colonizers is that assimilation or genocide of any population standing in its way is impossible to avoid, a by-product of unstoppable progress or religious destiny. Space provides both legitimacy to the scientific regime as well as literal space for the expansion of capital.

At this point, not many people are buying the myth of progress being sold by the elite investors backing the tele-





If we look at Mauna Kea through a civilized eye, we can see what the politicians, funders, and astronomers are thinking—there's nothing there.

scope. It is telling that a major funder of the telescope is Intel Corporation co-founder Gordon Moore who has committed \$200 million. The narrative and pathology of civilization is unrelenting in its ability to manipulate reality into a conflation of progress that defies all obvious hazards.

The logic of the telescope tells us that "out there" exists answers and fascination unlike any we have ever seen. We've been to the ends of the earth and must now extend up and out; we've populated the Earth's orbit with trash and tools of control, we must now look further.

The culture of the smug declares that we all hold the compendium of scientific knowledge collectively, even as this stands in direct contradiction to civilization's model of specialization. We are sold an outright and obvious lie once again. The unknown, for most domesticated humans, is no more than a few feet away. We live in a world where the unknowable beyond our eyesight somehow trumps the commonly unknown biological life underneath our feet and around our bodies.

The push for the Thirty Meter Telescope is grounded in a propaganda campaign that prioritizes the limited perception of space, through the eyes of a machine, no less, over the basic and cogent understanding of lived reality by living beings. Through imagining the experience and the supposed comprehension of the totality of scientific knowledge, we build a fantasy to relieve the brutality of daily life.

Science's application in the form of infrastructure is a physical manifestation that justifies our obsession with the fantasy. We supplant reality, first by domination, then by imagining and divorcing ourselves from the world, convinced that better and more thorough understandings exist.

If we look at Mauna Kea through a civilized eye, we can see what the politicians, funders, and astronomers are thinking—there's nothing there. Empty space, a vessel of ground from which knowledge may sprout.

Why should the givers of scientific truth be forbidden from

expanding what is their essential right to knowledge? It is the same logic on display in the mountains not far from my home in the Appalachians mountains home where wind turbines now mar the entire line of sight.

The unflinching scientific propaganda put forth by the promoters of the Thirty Meter Telescope makes clear that this is the perfect site. The land, some of the most wild left on the planet, should now finally provide for civilization.

In 2015, in the early stages of the latest resistance to the Thirty Meter Telescope, *The New York Times* published a telling editorial stating, "The telescope builders have a strong claim to legitimacy, and they are being blamed for things they had nothing to do with."

Carrying on with the absurdity they write: "This is an unfair burden for a group that has spent years cultivating local support, navigating the approval process and successfully — so far — fending off lawsuits. It insists its paperwork is in order."

In a few short sentences, *The Times* manages to encapsulate the entire struggle—the paperwork is order. We have the right to destroy whatever we want. Science is, after all, the essence of "legitimacy" in modernity and the blockades are anything but legitimate.

What has changed since 2015 that there is now popular support for the current struggle for Mauna Kea? There are many factors to analyze: a vibrant decolonization movement; successive blockade struggles breaking into the media; the absurdity of development at all in the face of catastrophic climate change.

But what can be hoped is that there's some rejection of the logic of the telescope and the logic of frontier and perhaps, a long-awaited embrace of the logic of the mountain.

The time has come to reject science as a method of hierarchical understanding.

Steve Kirk is an anarcho-primitivist author, musician and an editor at *Oak: A Journal Against Civilization*. OakJournal.org.

Josh Dukes, the victim of a right-wing shooting, following his recovery from a stomach wound.



Seattle Far-Right Shooter's Trial Ends in Hung Jury

How can we get justice in an unjust system?

RUI PRETI

Following the recent dismissal of charges against a right-wing woman who shot an anarchist anti-fascist activist in 2017, the question of how anarchists should or should not interact with the state's mis-named justice system has become more relevant than ever. The victim's own anarchist stance on state-administered justice and possible alternatives to it have added needed complexity to a perennial issue.

On January 20, 2017, the day Donald Trump was inaugurated President of the United States, an anarchist anti-fascist was shot in Seattle. It happened in a crowded square on the campus of the University of Washington (UW) during a protest against a talk by misogynist, transphobe, racist, xenophobic and serial harasser, Milo Yiannopoulos.

The far-right assailant, Elizabeth Hokoana, shot the protester point blank in the abdomen. The victim, initially identified as Hex to minimize doxing and other harassment from the right, came close to dying.

After a delay of two and a half years, Elizabeth Hokoana was finally brought to trial in July 2019. The result was a hung jury in August. Her husband, Marc, who assaulted several anti-fascist demonstrators with pepper spray at the same protest, was tried alongside Elizabeth, and the jury could not reach consensus on his guilt either.

The couple's trial in a Seattle courtroom lasted five weeks. After the trial the jury deliberated for five days before announcing that it was unable to agree on a verdict. The jury foreman later explained that "a handful of jurors sympathized with and held similar conservative political views to Marc and Elizabeth Hokoana," and therefore refused to find either of them guilty. The judge declared a mistrial. Shortly after-

wards the prosecutor announced there would not be a retrial and criminal charges against both Hokoanas were dismissed.

The outcome of this case normalizes extra-legal far-right violence against those who protest, including attempted murder and assault.

The experience of Elizabeth and Marc Hokoana was strikingly different from that of anti-fascist demonstrators arrested during the protests against the Trump inauguration or other confrontations with the far-right.

The evidence of what happened was clear, especially because of videos and other material as well as narratives provided to independent journalists and the police by several people who had been on the scene. During the trial Elizabeth Hokoana admitted having gone to the University of Washington that evening with her loaded 9mm Glock semi-automatic pistol in a holster under her parka ready to use. She brought that gun apparently not worrying about the university's ban of firearms on campus.

Yiannopoulos was invited to speak on the UW campus by the College Republicans before the Trump election. As soon as the engagement was announced, many university students, workers, faculty, and community members expressed strong objections to his appearance because of a history of encouraging fans to commit violence. As the time approached, Yiannopoulos justified their fears by using his Twitter account to repeatedly advocate carrying guns on campus in defiance of UW rules and striking out against those who opposed him.

Despite the objections and Yiannopoulos' provocative attitude, the UW administration decided to permit the event to take place in the name of freedom of expression, while asking for police assistance in crowd control.

Predictably, the evening of January 20 saw tense confrontations on the campus between right-wing Yiannopoulos and

Trump supporters and anti-fascist protesters. Hex, a longtime member of the IWW and an anarchist anti-fascist was there. In the turmoil, Elizabeth shot and critically injured Hex, as he was trying to stop her husband Marc from assaulting protesters with pepper spray.

In videos shown during the trial, Marc was seen initiating assaults against anti-fascists. He was also heard telling Elizabeth, "Don't shoot anybody [yet]!... They have to start it!"

Despite the massive police presence at the scene of the crime, Elizabeth and Marc Hokoana were able to walk away and go home following the shooting. A few hours later, they turned themselves into the campus police. That night, Marc claimed to be the shooter and justified his act as self-defense. The police took Elizabeth's handgun and Marc's cell phone, and their car was impounded. But both Hokoanas were released later that same night without charges.

When the police attempted to view the content of Marc Hokoana's cell phone it was found to have been wiped clean. However, his Facebook page was located. It showed Marc was an admirer of Trump, Breitbart News and Breitbart editor Ben Shapiro. It also showed him to be a gun enthusiast and to have boasted about his plans to go to the UW with the intention of "cracking skulls" while his wife would be carrying a gun.

At the end of March, Elizabeth Hokoana confessed that she had pulled the trigger. Although she claimed she shot Hex because he was about to stab Marc, no knife was ever found or seen on the videos showing him trying to restrain her husband.

On April 24, 2017, Elizabeth was formally charged with first-degree assault with a firearm, and Marc charged with third-degree assault for his use of pepper spray.

In May, the Hokoana couple had a hearing at which the judge set bail of \$10,000 for each of them, even though the prosecutor had asked for \$50,000. Their families were able to help raise the bail, so both of them remained out of jail while awaiting trial during the ensuing two and a half years.

THE ANARCHIST RESPONSE?

It is definitely not easy to figure out an adequate response to the ongoing and even escalating far-right violence on college campuses and throughout the country since 2016.

A few days after the shooting Josh Dukes was identified by the *Seattle Times* as the anarchist anti-fascist victim. Dukes made it known early on that he would not press charges against the Hokoanas and would not participate in any trial that might be held, because he does not believe that what is known as the justice system can resolve anything or rehabilitate anyone.

He wanted to attempt restorative justice, focusing on recognizing the perpetrator as a human being who could begin to understand the ways the community was hurt and social

Josh Dukes
after being
shot by a
far-right
assailant,
Jan. 20, 2017.
His assailant
went free.



solidarity disrupted by the act. Dukes also felt it im-

portant to deal with what had happened in a way that would not contradict his longstanding opposition to the police and prison system as giving power to a variety of repressive and punitive state bodies. Marc and Elizabeth Hokoana predictably refused to participate in such a process because they do not share Dukes' anarchist values.

Others who, like Dukes, also reject the so-called justice system as unjust have nevertheless felt it important to participate in trials of far-right and neo-nazi assailants as a form of harm reduction.

They argue that in the short term, it is important to help incarcerate such violent aggressors by testifying against them in court in order to limit their ability to injure or kill more people. This was the case for some of those who were injured by James Fields, the far-right assailant who used his car as a weapon against anti-fascist protesters in, 2017, during the Unite The Right events in Charlottesville, Virginia. One of the injured wrote, "Fields' conviction is one of the rare occasions when the injustice system is acting fairly. His sentencing neither exonerates nor vindicates our racist, classist injustice system."

At the same time it is important to remember that the police and the courts have usually proved more interested in investigating and prosecuting anarchists and leftists, even when they are victims, than in dealing with far-right aggression.

Continuing to explore ways of going beyond what the state defines as justice is more vital than ever.

Rui Preti lives in the Pacific Northwest. They are a longtime friend of the Fifth Estate and a great believer in the value of continuous questioning and challenging the status quo.

For more details of the inauguration-day shooting, see "An Anarchist is Shot in Seattle: How will it be resolved? By the State or with Restorative Justice?" by CP & SM, Fifth Estate, Summer 2017.

Museum Chronicles Fightback & Victories Against Gentrification

Squats & Community Gardens Saved
by Direct Action & Solidarity

BILL WEINBERG

Above the front door to C-Squat, on Ave. C on Manhattan's Lower East Side, a weather-worn sign hangs from the fire escape reading "THIS LAND IS OURS, NOT FOR SALE," with the squatter symbol of a circle bisected by a lightning bolt. It dates back to the 1980s,



The storefront housing the Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space in NYC.

when the building was taken over by anarcho-punk squatters.

Below, on the window of the storefront, a much newer sign reads, Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space (MoRUS).

I was among the crew that came together to launch the Museum in 2012. The core group behind the project were members of Time's Up!, a street-action oriented environmental and bicycle advocacy group. I still work with the Museum today, as an organic historian—that is, one without academic training, but rather drawing on lived experience.

The Lower East Side neighborhood has been aggressively gentrified over the past generation, but still features the highest concentration of New York City's hundreds of community gardens as well as 11 squatter buildings that have sur-

vived the wave of evictions in the 1990s by being brought into the city's Urban Homestead Program. Squatters who lived in city-owned vacant buildings were granted up to \$10,000 per unit who agreed to renovate the dwellings.

As I relate on my Saturday and Sunday walking tours of the radical history of the neighborhood, these examples of reclamation-from-below emerged from New York's urban crisis of the 1970s. The capital flight and wave of landlord arson and abandonment was followed by a program of planned shrinkage imposed by the city's financial establishment, with basic services cut off to New York's "bad neighborhoods" (as they were called, with overt racism).

Left to their own devices in a neighborhood essentially written off by the city government, locals started taking matters into their own hands.

First, Puerto Rican residents began turning vacant lots into community gardens, converting rubble into soil through composting, growing fruits, vegetables and flowers, and restoring a sense of community amid the blight and abandonment.

In 1977, the Lower East Side gardeners joined with other gardeners around the city to form the Green Guerrillas who succeeded in pressuring the city to launch the Greenthumb Program, that afforded a degree of protection for the gardens from would-be developers.

Local residents also began moving into the vacant buildings, fixing them up and turning them into livable homes again. This led to the emergence of the city's homesteading program, which provided a legal framework for the reclaiming of these buildings.

The homesteaders were followed in the 1980s by the squatters—generally, younger, whiter and scruffier. They had no patience for the homesteading program—partly because they correctly perceived that it was too slow and limited, and not enough buildings were being opened up. But also partly because of their anarchist DIY (do-it-yourself) ethic. Over the decade, some 30 buildings on the Lower East Side were opened as squats.

It was New York City's economic recovery, following a near-bankruptcy in the 1980s that ultimately threatened these experiments. The last of the factories across the East River on the Brooklyn waterfront were shut down, and the old urban working class was disenfranchised of its niche in the city's economy.

The new economy began to take over—FIRE, for finance, insurance, real estate (today updated to TAMI—technology, advertising, media, information). The children of the white flight generation, whose parents had fled to the suburbs a generation ago, started to move back to the city and recol-

Resistance re-emerged—this time less nihilist and **more ecologically minded**—when the city moved to **start bulldozing** community gardens.

onize the urban core, becoming the new class—the young, upwardly mobile urban professionals, or yuppies.

Suddenly, the city's so-called bad neighborhoods were reconceived as bedroom communities for yuppies. And the Lower East Side was in the vanguard, against its will—right on Manhattan island, with easy access to Midtown and Wall Street. Suddenly, abandoned properties taken over by gardeners and squatters were hot real estate.

This set off a wave of evictions—first of the squatters, many of whom were loud and visible, and angrily protesting the gentrification of the neighborhood. This anger exploded in the Tompkins Square riot of August 6, 1988, the start of what can only be called a three-year uprising on the Lower East Side.

Several riots followed until the city finally closed the park (the main gathering place for the protesters) in 1991. For two years, there was no park in the neighborhood.

This was the turning point, when the resistance was crushed and the forces of gentrification consolidated their victory. In the last big squat eviction operation, in which three buildings were raided on 13th Street in May 1995, the police brought out an armored vehicle and placed snipers with rifles on surrounding rooftops. By the end of the '90s, there were 11 squatter buildings left.

But resistance re-emerged—this time less nihilist and more ecologically minded—when the city next moved to start bulldozing those community gardens not protected by the Greenthumb Program. This also saw the first real cooperation between the older Puerto Rican gardeners and the young white anarchists in the neighborhood. Young activists borrowed tactics from the radical environmentalists out West who were working to save the old-growth forests, by locking down to the trees.

Eventually, there were negotiations over the fate of the remaining 11 squats—despite the mutual suspicions of the squatters and city authorities. In 2003, a deal was formalized whereby the designated buildings were brought into the



Bill Weinberg leads a tour of NYC's Lower East Side community gardens and squats.

The Museum of Reclaimed Urban Space is at 155 Ave. C. It is open weekends, and sporadically on weekdays. Weekend walking tours begin at 3pm. MorusNYC.org. 646.340.8341.

homesteading program. One by one, the city Buildings Department signed off that they met the city housing code, and they became legal co-ops. While the residents of C-Squat still call the building a squat, the city authorities consider it a legalized homestead.

After several community gardens were destroyed to make way for increasingly upscale housing developments, there were similar negotiations to save the remaining gardens. Under two deals brokered by the New York State attorney general, many of the remaining guerrilla gardens were brought into the Greenthumb Program, and saved from the bulldozers.

All this history is documented at the MoRUS, in photographs, video displays, and archival materials. And in the walking tours we hold each weekend.

Some old rads in the neighborhood have looked askance at the project viewing it as a commodification of the district's radical history for the tourists. I acknowledge this critique, but purity is impossible under capitalism.

When I talk to young people on my tours who don't even know that the Tompkins Square Park riot even happened, I'm convinced of the importance of preserving this history.

Bill Weinberg blogs at CounterVortex.org

Why anarchists should take up the 50-year-old project of the Gray Panthers

A Vision for Intergenerational Solidarity

Demonstrator at the Waterville, Maine Global Climate Strike, Sept. 20.
photo: Peter Werbe



ERIC LAURSEN

A friend tells me of his first job out of college. He was hired to run a senior center, not attached to a nursing home, in the Bronx. It was his first exposure to a community of elderly, and he was saddened at what he saw: dozens of women and men, many of whom had once lived fulfilling lives according to the values of American society, now sitting in day rooms, watching television, many of them seldom talking, some nearly catatonic.

It was the early 1970s, and the prevailing philosophy was that older people, who once had aged with their families, should instead be clustered together, sometimes in Sunbelt retirement so-called communities, more often in grim habitations like the one my friend was helping to run. They weren't happy. In fact, their lives were being wasted.

My friend noticed something else. They were being ripped off by a pharmacy that was supplying prescriptions for most of the residents.

This was an opportunity as much as a problem, and my friend helped create one of the first senior action groups at the center. They sent groups of residents to other pharmacies in the area to compare drug prices, then used the local press to publicize the discrepancies. After that, they started comparing interest rates offered by their banks.

"I realized this is a powerhouse," my friend told me. "These were people with knowledge and with time on their hands. Given the opportunity, they knew how to organize and get things done."

A tidal wave of elder activism hit the U.S. in the 1960s and 1970s. The Age Discrimination in Employment Act was passed in 1967 and a succession of amendments made it stronger over the next decade.

Groups like the National Senior Citizens Law Center, the Older Women's League, and the National Caucus and Center on the Black Aged became politically active. Existing groups like the American Association of Retired Persons and the labor-funded National Council of Senior Citizens grew as well.

But the most visionary group in the Age Wave was the Gray Panthers. Found-

ed by a group of labor movement veterans and other politically minded elderly, the Panthers were a decentralized group that delegated power to its local networks and developed a shared leadership arrangement instead of a hierarchical structure.

They organized clinics and other resources for self-help. And, they adopted a broad social and political agenda that included nationalizing transportation and the oil industry and opposing nuclear energy and "the concentration of corporate power."

One of the basic principles of the Panthers was that it was not an organization only for old people. The original name was the Consultation of Older and Younger Adults. "One of the reasons our society is in such a mess," said Panthers founder Maggie Kuhn, "is that we're isolated from each other. The old are isolated by government policy."

The fundamental problem for organizers like Kuhn was that by separating the elderly from younger people, society misses out on the wisdom, expertise, and commitment they offer. The aged miss out on the chance to take part in larger

social movements driven by younger people. Instead of segregating the elderly, Kuhn argued for cooperative mixed-age communities that develop a vision drawn from everybody's particular desires and gifts.

Unfortunately, that's not what's happened. Elder advocate groups continue to do good work, but most have focused on working within the system rather than creating an alternative to it. After Kuhn's death, the Gray Panthers relocated their headquarters to Washington DC and reoriented as a membership-driven lobbying organization rather than a grassroots insurgency.

The progress made in the earlier decades has stalled. Age discrimination continues to be a plague, even though the elderly and near-elderly face rising health care and housing costs and the need, in many cases, to assist their children and grandchildren financially in an increasingly ruthless economy. This means more of them want or need to keep working than previously.

Older workers, nearing retirement age, increasingly find themselves in low-wage jobs or gigs. Often, in the case of women, providing home care to the very old for less-than-adequate wages. Nursing-home abuses, which were first exposed by activists in the 1970s, persist.

Very little of this registers with the private-sector employers, from Amazon to Wal-Mart, who see the elderly as a cheap labor force helping to hold down wages, or the for-profit housing and health care providers who stand to benefit from the whittling-back of Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security.

And why not? By 2040, some one in five Americans will be age 65 or older, compared to about one in eight in 2000, according to U.S. Census Bureau projections, and the elderly will outnumber children under 18.

It's not that anyone is suggesting the elderly go back to the senior-center day rooms into which they were shuttled in past decades. Indeed, the prevailing philosophy is that the elderly should be active. The problem is that nobody bothers to ask what kind of activity they'd like to be doing.

There's no doubt the elderly welcome the opportunity to remain productive, useful, and (at least) involved, but their life experiences under capitalism vary dramatically. Some, who worked at physically demanding jobs, or in mining or other occupations that literally poison them, want and have earned the right to a long break. That is, to retire.

Many others are making the best of a bad situation, working low-paying jobs or picking up sporadic gigs, such as driving cars for Uber or doing seasonal inventories in warehouses (as documented in Jessica Bruder's unsettling book, *Nomadland: Surviving America in the Twenty-First Century*).

Rebuilding social ties just as the precarious economy is designed in part to make it harder for younger people to organize against the state and capitalism, it cuts social supports



Capitalism and the state value only those social configurations that fit well in a market-driven economic model: the individual worker/consumer, the nuclear family, the household.

out from under the elderly who otherwise might use their energy and passion to help build movements of resistance. As a style of living, the scramble to make ends meet may or may not be an improvement over the nursing homes and senior centers, but politically, it accomplishes the same goal.

There's no reason it has to be this way, and the initial vision of the Gray Panthers suggests a very different path. Households that continue to adhere to a non-atomized, non-capitalist model, such as many in the Hispanic community, often live in multigenerational arrangements, rather than expecting the elderly to migrate elsewhere.

They benefit not only from the material assistance that grandparents offer, but from the implicit criticism that the elderly often pose to the monetized, commercialized culture trying to seduce their grandchildren. Shared housing and pooling of resources are becoming imperative in an increasingly grim economic system, but they also provide an opportunity for generations to reconnect and develop collective strategies for survival, and in so doing, bring social assets back under community control.

This gets to the heart of what anarchists and other anti-authoritarians seek to achieve. Capitalism and the state value only those social configurations that fit well in a market-driven economic model: the individual worker/consumer, the nuclear family, the household.

This leaves out many of the elderly (and certainly the old old), especially if they are from low-income communities or are people of color.

Anarchism isn't just revolutionary. It's restorative, proposing to resurrect the social ties that capitalism dismisses and devalues, including those between ethnic groups and within the working class, local communities, and neighborhoods.

And, as importantly, those between generations.

Eric Laursen is a longtime anarchist organizer and writer living in Buckland, Mass. He is the author of *The People's Pension: The Struggle to Defend Social Security Since Reagan* (2012, AK Press)



Musings on My 84th Birthday We Have Work To Do Before Catastrophe Strikes

DAVE HANSON

The most important tasks for those of us who would wear the anarcho-primitivist label, are to wait and watch the acceleration of the collapse of modernity and technology while we learn how to live without them.

Anarcho-primitivism should not be labeled as re-wilding, and considering all the baggage attached to the word primitive, we should probably think of a new label for cultural and ecological organization that has a possibility of survival at the depths of a rapid global, environmental collapse and mass extinction.

Each of us is locked into a time period of three or four generations. My life spans the transition from horses to robots. Lying on my back, trying to sleep with 200 cows on a cattle drive, I watched, excited but with a deep sense of trouble, our first satellite blinking its way across the night sky.

My fear, it turns out, was justified. The trajectory of change over this brief life span is characterized by increasing complexity of technology and by loss of global, biological health. We apparently have not been smart enough to protect the world we share.

The arc of human evolution took a sharp turn with religions, city states and agriculture, all of which were disastrous mutations. The experiment of modernity, beginning about 10,000 years ago, has quickly brought us to the potential end of our species, with the only questions left being how long will this collapse take, and what will be left in its wake.

The most fundamental realities in Ecology have been either not understood or dismissed. Many of those who understand the contemporary emergency are preaching solutions which they must know are futile. Many of them could not give a cogent summary of the laws of thermodynamics. Most of them are faking it and holding their breath.

Catastrophes are not new. As we move into the era of the sixth great mass extinction, we have little reason to believe humans will somehow survive as other forms of life perish. From an ecological perspective, we have no particular value to global health and it is the height of hypocrisy to suggest that the toxic species that brought us to this cliff is now the species that will save us.

Survival in the material world will be increasingly difficult in the years to come, especially for people who have no idea how to live without relentless consumption. The supply chain from earth to body will be interrupted and our skills may become irrelevant, but there are ways to learn and prepare now for the difficult times ahead.

My grandfather could make a harness for a draft horse. I did not need that skill, but wish I could teach it to my grandchildren, who might. Can you grow some food for yourself? Do you know the wild, edible plants near you? Can you build shelter for your family? Do you live in a location where you can get what you need without an automobile?

Do you know and get along enough with your neighbors to share with them? Where will your medications come from if your pharmacy is gone? Can you perform first aid? Can you make shoes? Clothes? Blankets?

Can you stay warm without buying energy? What skills do you have that you can trade for the skills of others? Do you have an idea about how, and where anarchists can learn these things?

About fifty years ago, I lived in the sole village on a small, Pacific Ocean island in Micronesia, home to several hundred people.

There was an airport, used once a week, one jeep, one

sedan, two small trucks, and a few motorcycles. There was a one room store that sold beer, a few canned goods, bags of rice and served as a post office.

There was electricity from a generator that ran much of the time, and most homes had at least one operating light bulb. There was a medical nurse trained at the Fiji School of Tropical Medicine.

The island experienced a typhoon with sustained winds over 150 mph that destroyed every private home and killed all the garden crops. It lasted three days and turned the village into a pile of rubble much like what we saw after the hurricane in the Bahamas.

When the wind stopped, the villagers left the caves that had spared them from flying debris, gathered the pieces of their houses and put them back together. They drank rainwater, ate native fruits, tubers, land crabs, chickens, bats and fish, and replanted their gardens. Life quickly returned to normal, with a resilience based on their history of reasonable needs and sharing.

We are crossing one degree centigrade, and cannot precisely predict when we will cross two degrees that will seal the trajectory of collapse. Feedback loops will accelerate the rate of warming and death. We should be searching for models of community organization that will be useful as this deadly edifice of modernity crashes around us.

People who think they are preparing for collapse have some solutions for survival. Using solar power and storing dried food and large quantities of fuel are safeguards against immediate, short term events, but our training and preparation must be for the absence of any and all inputs from outside the immediate community over an indefinite time span.

It is a mistake to think we can individually care for and protect ourselves from others if we store enough food, live in a remote location, and have enough arms and ammunition to protect ourselves from the government or hungry invaders. Urban dwellers, in fact, may have more resources of skills and a better chance of creating supportive commu-



nities than those hiding in the woods.

The most difficult aspect of any attempt to look into our future is the question about social organization. Our experiments in religion, government, and human dominion have clearly failed, as has our language and flawed hierarchy of meaning that excludes all which does not fit the narrative of superior human consciousness and power.

A human community aware of its appropriate place in the local biosphere will keep us connected to our global home. We must be anarchistic, small, powerless creatures of the forest, desert and prairie. All leadership must be tenuous and temporary. This communal practice will keep us connected to the web of life in our bioregion, and with an egalitarian local organization, mitigate against our worst impulses.

Our stories, songs, dances and altered states can harmonize our actions to benefit both our own community and this wondrous earth/home of which we are a small part.

If we cannot return to this, we will be gone.

Dave Hanson lives in the Pacific Northwest, much of the time at his cabin in the forest of the Olympic Peninsula. His working life included logging, ranching, education, and home construction. He taught Shamanism for thirty three years.



Certain Days: The 2020 Freedom for Political Prisoners Calendar

Featuring radical historical dates, 12 thought-provoking articles, plus beautiful prisoner artwork for each month. In its 19th year of publication, all proceeds support political prisoners and organizations advocating the end of mass incarceration.

Featured with art and essays are Annie Banks, Aric McBay, Bitty, Christi Belcourt, Cindy Milstein, David Gilbert, Eric King, Ethan X. Parker, Fernando Marti, Garen Zakarian, Jaan Laaman, Marius Mason, Mary Tremonte, Molly Fair, No New Jails, Oso Blanco, Richard Rivera, Stephen Wilson, teev, Termite Collective, Victoria Law, Xinachtli and others.

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Fifth Estate Censored by Prison Authorities

All issues blocked to Pennsylvania prisoners

Incarcerated subscribers to this magazine are being subjected to increasing censorship from prison authorities.

The worst has been Pennsylvania's Department of Corrections which refused to allow delivery of the Summer 2019 issue of the Fifth Estate to subscribers in their prison system.

Pennsylvania initiated a policy last year that requires letters and periodicals to be sent to a central address rather than being delivered directly to individual prisoners in state lockups.

This policy hits prisoners receiving personal mail the hardest. Letters now must be sent to Smart Communications in St. Petersburg, Florida which scans them, stores them electronically, and inmates receive printout copies.

That means those locked up don't get to touch the letter a loved one wrote. Also, digital copies can be retained for law enforcement investigative purposes.

Periodicals, such as ours, books, calendars, photo albums and other printed items are required to be sent to a Security Processing Center in Bellefonte, Penn. It is here that a censor decided that no prison subscriber will receive the Fifth Estate.

Pennsylvania authorities say they

began Smart Communication's MailGuard system after letters were found soaked in drugs. The MailGuard site brags that it "finally eliminates one of corrections longest running problems and security loopholes — contraband and secret communications in inmate postal mail. MailGuard completely cuts off the last conduits of drugs and undocumented inmate communications with the outside world."

The refusal of subscriptions paid for by Fifth Estate supporters for our Prisoner Fund is completely arbitrary. In fact, no reason was given whatsoever. Just a Post Office form of a Xeroxed address label returned to us with REFUSED stamped on it.

Although this is not shocking given the brutal nature of prisons, it is disheartening for Pennsylvania prisoners. This arbitrariness of censorship is more the rule than the exception.

In something like the old Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books), the Texas prison system bans over 10,000 titles of 250,000 which are approved.

Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is OK with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice as are two books by former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard David Duke. Harry

Potter books are banned as is Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. One wonders, who went through over a quarter of a million titles to choose which were allowed?

Most recently, a California prison (we withhold which specific one to avoid more censorship) refused our Summer 2019 issue because a graphic displayed "frontal nudity." Since the prison offered us an appeal on behalf of our prisoner subscriber, we informed the jail officials that painting in question was William Bouguereau's "La Jeunesse de Bacchus," a famous 19th century painting going at a Sotheby auction for up to \$35 million.

We also wrote, "We considered sending notice of this ban to California media outlets figuring they would have a field day with 'Prison Bans \$35M Art' as a headline, but we would rather have our subscribers receive their issues."

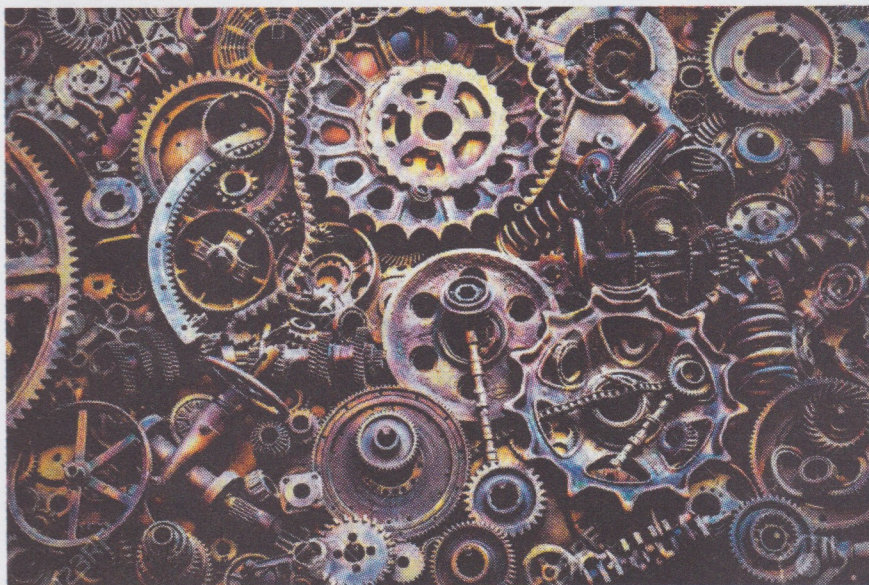
Somehow, this worked! We were notified that the prisoner would receive the issue.

The Winter 2019 issue was refused at a prison because of our use of Delacroix's 1830 painting, "Liberty Leading the People," where the Liberty figure shows one bare breast (which actually is a little weird. Sort of like Janet Jackson's Super Bowl "wardrobe malfunction" of a few years ago).

When the prison officials were notified of its origins, even though the 19th century Parisians depicted were wearing yellow vests, they relented and delivered the issue.

The Pennsylvania situation has not been remedied. We thank NYC Anarchist Black Cross who helped us by writing each prisoner explaining the situation. They do important work to "free all U.S.-held political prisoners and prisoners of war!" as their web site states.

Contact them at NYC ABC, PO Box 110034, Brooklyn, New York 11211, [nycabc\[at\]riseup\[dot\]net](mailto:nycabc[at]riseup[dot]net), [instagram.com/nycabc](https://www.instagram.com/nycabc), and [facebook.com/nycabc](https://www.facebook.com/nycabc).



Feral Technology:

Is going backward the only way forward?

RICH DANA (RICARDO FERAL)

"Everything not saved will be lost."
—Nintendo quit screen message

Well into the 21st century, the term Feral Technology has entered the contemporary discourse, but with some exceptionally non-feral technology companies using the moniker because—well, they think it sounds really cool. The meaning of words is irrelevant in a world in search of a catchy web address.

My early interest in feral technology was motivated by a fascination with repurposing salvaged equipment or using technology in unintended ways. How to run your truck on used fryer grease, how to create burnable methane from dog poop, how to build a geodesic dome greenhouse out of what you find in the dumpster.

I was fully immersed in the worlds of DIY, sustainability, and renewable energy, and how those ideas might free us from the strangling grip of capitalism and help us begin the process of re-wilding ourselves and the planet. However, by 2009, feral tech was quickly being domesticated.

My obsession with all things sustainable brought me to the misnamed National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) where I worked as an energy specialist. Despite the allusion to E.F. Schumaker's *Small is Beautiful*, NCAT is funded primarily by the US Department of Agriculture, and my job consisted mostly of working with farmers who wanted to tap into Obama-era subsidies for wind, solar, and bio-energy projects.

One afternoon, I received a call from a researcher interested in how to make biodiesel from poppy seeds. He explained that he worked for DARPA, the shadowy Defense Department agency tasked with adapting emerging technologies for the military. He was looking for ways for the US Expeditionary Forces (the Marines) in Afghanistan to "reduce their dependence on fossil fuels."

He requested more info on small-scale biodiesel production and gave me his email address which ended in @cia.gov. I was coming to the realization that even my bohemian, *Whole Earth Catalog*, DIY tech dreams had unintended consequences.

Speculative fiction writer, William Gibson, wrote about the role of the bohemian in his 1999, *All Tomorrow's Parties*: "They (bohemia) were a crucial aspect of industrial civilization in the previous two centuries. They were where industrial civilization went to dream. A sort of unconscious R&D, exploring alternate societal strategies."

I had inadvertently been doing Research and Development for The Man! I left my position at NCAT a short time later, and began publishing a newspaper, *OBSOLETE!*, to explore technological and cultural obsolescence.

The process of communicating through a printed medium felt right, like creating a message in a bottle and throwing it into the analog ocean, rather than the digital slipstream. An invitation not for "Likes," but for serendipity.

I concluded the introduction to the first issue with the following:

"You are doing the best that you can. We all are. What is an under-employed hipster with an over-extended credit card to do? More rushing ahead just seems to get us where we are right now. Perhaps it's time for a lateral move.

"Instead of sending new technology to the 'developing world,' let's look at the adaptation strategies that the Third World has adopted to survive the alien technology onslaught. What can we learn? Let's dumpster-dive our culture

and see what the corporatocracy has left behind. Make something new out of the empty vacu-form plastic package that they sold you your life in."

A lateral move is the first yogic step toward the deconstruction of capitalism's all-consuming glooshmaker. I began to look at old technology, not as a new way forward, not as an artisanal business plan, but as a tool for first achieving cultural homeostasis, transcendence, and then, hopefully, de-industrialization.

Throwing our wooden shoes into the gears of the machine can only slow it down for a minute, and preaching green anarchy through digital media only serves to de-fang the ideas we so desperately need to embrace. Ask any feral cat, and they will tell you that our next meal is waiting in the dumpster, and it may be a bountiful feast, or a Darwinian battle for survival.

Under capitalism, technology does not reach its full potential until it is obsolete. As machines lose value as drivers of economic growth, they are cast-off, at which point they fall into the realm of tinkers and hobbyists, then into the hands of artists and revolutionaries. There, they are used (hopefully) not to generate profit, but as tools of liberation.

Within Marxian economic theory, this is a conversion from pure exchange value (how much money is it worth) to pure use value (what human need it satisfies). As Gibson points out, the churn of commodification within capitalist society consumes all new ideas as fodder for profit. Eventually, revolution becomes fashion.

Currently, I am fully immersed in the restoration of a 1920s-era Intertype hot-lead typesetting machine. This cacophonous wonder has no occult code, no algorithms. To create words, it must be oiled and greased and fed "pigs" of lead, tin and antimony. Its design was stolen from a watchmaker's assistant, and the lines of text produced for printing, cast in molten metal, drop from the machine like hot, shiny new bullets. To set type on it is to commune with the physical manifestation of *deus ex machina*. There is no Delete key.

The twilight of the industrial gives way to the always-on, high noon of digital culture, and revolution gives way to disruption. The clockwork universe of Newton surrendered to Freud's steam-powered id.

That is now being thrown, unceremoniously, into a shallow grave by bio-hacked transhumanists with fanatical visions of digital singularity/superego. But what of the industrial-era technology that refuses to die? What of the feral ideas that cross-breed in alleys, attracting the domesticated pets that wander too close to the shadowy edge of digital suburbia?

Postscript: "Everything not saved will be lost" is a common internet meme among techies, attributing a deeper philosophical meaning to the Quit screen at the end of early

Nintendo video games. It is, however, a misquote. The original message was, "All unsaved progress will be lost."

Rich Dana, AKA Ricardo Feral, is a carpenter/librarian/printer and the publisher of *OBSOLETE!* He lives in rural Iowa. rich@obsolete-press.com.



Will Van Spronsen wearing his John Brown Gun Club hat.
Image. ItsGoingDown.org

After the Buses Burned

Will Van Spronsen's Final Act Against Evil

DAVID ROVICS

In the early hours of July 13, Will Van Spronsen was shot to death by police outside of an ICE-contracted private detention facility holding migrants in Tacoma, Wash. He was confronted by police in a parking lot full of buses; buses that were to be used to deport large numbers of migrants in a coordinated, nationwide action launched by the Trump administration. Will was trying to destroy as many buses as possible.

He was placing flares to ignite the buses including underneath a 500-gallon propane tank, and ignited his own car, causing an explosion.

Will Van Spronsen was 69 years old, a member of the John Brown Gun Club and a veteran of many of the more anarchist-leaning collective efforts and social movements of his day, of our times, including campaigning against ICE.

Van Spronsen sent a final statement to his friends and comrades, where he wrote in part, "there's wrong and there's right. It's time to take action against the forces of evil." Armed with an AR15, it seems he was expecting his death would be the end result of his actions that night. The Tacoma cops said Van Spronsen pointed his weapon at four officers and they responded by shooting him multiple times. His gun had not been fired.

To the small extent that his actions of that night got any corporate press coverage, it focused, predictably, on Van Spronsen's mental health. Mental illness, their logic informs them, should be the only reasonable explanation for someone taking actions such as these.

Everyone has their own histories and lives, and there are few if any perfect specimens, but it's obvious that whatever personal obstacles Will was facing in his life, there was a clear political rationale for his bus-burning efforts. He made this abundantly clear in his own eloquent words, in the statement he wrote before he went to the ICE parking lot.

In his statement, he wrote: "i have a broken down body. and i have an unshakable abhorrence of injustice. that is what brings me here. this is my clear opportunity to try to make a difference."

In the face of what appeared to Will and many others to be the rise of an overtly fascist state complete with concentration camps, thinking and feeling people who share this analysis of how things are going are faced with certain choices. If prior efforts at organizing a reasonably egalitarian society have failed, and largely as a result of this failure, the white supremacist right is in the ascendancy and may soon make a bid for a completely dictatorial control of the state, people who have given up on more optimistic strategies can basically go in one of two directions. Hunker down with your friends and family and try to survive until times look a bit brighter, or resist.

Resistance, in a scenario where the fascists have taken over, such as, say, in Germany post-1933, is not the kind of resistance where a social movement has its eye on victory. This resistance is very different. It acknowledges that winning isn't a realistic option, and embraces a different orientation,



that of sabotage.

The burning of the buses at the ICE facility was an action in the tradition of workers in the munitions factories in occupied Holland during World War II who left out gunpowder in the bullets they were producing, which the German Army only discovered on the front lines in Russia during one battle that did not go as well as planned. Often times actions such as these are ultimately discovered, and those particular saboteurs paid with their lives.

This sort of action that involves the likelihood or certainty of your own death in carrying it out is a powerful meme, and not only among anarchists. I discovered this in a direct way after posting a song I wrote about Will Van Spronsen's actions ("The Time To Act") on YouTube.

The song got thousands more views than YouTube broadsides that mine usually get, with a significant minority of comments from fascists, who more or less openly identified as such, and who frequently wished that I and any other sympathizers with Van Spronsen's actions should face the same fate as he did.

Measuring the impact of an action is often impossible, usually because there are too many other factors in a big situation like this to be able to isolate any of them and say what impact one action had over another, if any.

What does seem clear, though, is that if you try to burn a bunch of buses at an ICE facility, you will draw both high praise and extreme hostility.

David Rovics is a Portland, Ore.-based singer/songwriter. DavidRovics.com for downloadable music & touring schedule.



The 2020 Slingshot Organizer Day Planner

Featuring radical information for every day of the year, a contact list of radical groups around the globe, a menstrual calendar, info on police repression, and more.

The *Organizer*, now in its 25th year, comes in 176-page versions as a pocket edition and a spiral bound desk version. Sales allow the Slingshot collective in Berkeley, Calif. to print and distribute its newspaper for free, and to donate to other projects such as the Fifth Estate.

Order on-line at akpress.org/slingshotorganizer2019.html or directly from them at slingshotcollective.org/the-organizer.

A list of stores that sell the *Organizer* and info about the paper is on the Slingshot website slingshotcollective.org.



RON SAKOLSKY

"There is no individuality without liberty, and liberty is the greatest menace to authority."

—Emma Goldman, *The Individual, Society and the State* (1937)

The figure of Emma Goldman still looms large on the anarchist horizon, not least because of her passion for proclaiming the liberty necessary for individuality to flourish as an essential ingredient of any social revolution worthy of the name.

In recognition of the 150th anniversary of her birth and the 100th anniversary of her deportation as an "undesirable alien," The Surrealist Research and Development Monograph Series has issued a new pamphlet which showcases her 1937 essay, "The Individual, Society and the State," along with illuminating introductory essays by Penelope Rosemont, Gale Ahrens, and my own essay appearing here in abridged form.

Since her essay, "The Individual, Society and the State," was written only three years before her death, we can assume that it reflects her lifelong thinking about and acting to achieve a social revolution that does not threaten the sanctity of one's individuality.

In that essay, she critiques what she considers the artificial dichotomy between the individual and community, and instead seeks to affirm their compatibility. She explains that

The Marvelous Dance of Anarchy & Individuality

On the occasion of Emma Goldman's 150th Birthday

individualism (especially the peculiarly American "rugged individualism" of the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches mythology) is an abstract ideology. It designates what one is expected to believe by society, and is repressive of individual liberty if one's way of living does not serve or subversively challenges those expectations.

The miserabilist nature of such an arid conception of individual freedom is supportive of social uniformity and constituted authority. Individuality, on the other hand, defines who we are as individuals and can be indicative of how we live our lives as self-creating human beings within a larger context of fluid and convivial forms of mutuality.

Instead of the rigidity of fixed ideas and moral edicts, Goldman envisions a reciprocal dynamic between the individual and society. Her fervent embrace of the magnificent dance of life has most widely been manifested in recent times in the emblematic (non)quote, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."

While there is actually no proof that she ever said those exact words, the "quote" might better be understood as a paraphrase of one of the most dramatic defenses of her own indomitable spirit of individuality of the many which can be found in her 1934 autobiography, *Living My Life*.

Early in the book, she tells us that while in the midst of organizing a strike in New York City as a young woman, she attended social events sponsored by her anarchist comrades at which she refused to deny the free reign of her pleasure or constrain her individuality in order to satisfy either the conformist expectations of mainstream society or the prudishness of the leftist milieu. (see sidebar)

In terms of the poetic truth of that story, the dance incident in question can be seen here as a metaphor for all of Goldman's countless battles with not only the authoritarian nature of the larger society but with some of her own

IF I CAN'T DANCE. . .

"At the dances I was one of the most untiring and gayest. One evening a cousin of Sasha [Alexander Berkman], a young boy, took me aside. With a grave face, as if he were about to announce the death of a dear comrade, he whispered to me that it did not behoove an agitator to dance. Certainly not with such reckless abandon, anyway. It was undignified for one who was on the way to become a force in the anarchist movement. My frivolity would only hurt the Cause. I grew furious at the impudent interference of the boy. I told him to mind his own business, I was tired of having the Cause constantly thrown into my face. I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand the denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to become a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. 'I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things.' Anarchism meant that to me, and I would live it in spite of the whole world—prisons, persecution, everything. Yes, even in spite of the condemnation of my own comrades I would live my beautiful ideal."

— Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (Penguin Classics, 2006).

comrades' finger-wagging strictures over the course of her lifetime.

Unfortunately, not all anarchists have understood how the Goldman who is typically associated with anarcho-communism could also be the Goldman that was deeply influenced in her thinking by individualist anarchism. While many anarcho-communists and anarcho-syndicalists viciously attacked the egoism of Max Stirner as a form of selfishness (seeming to confuse it with bourgeois egotism), Goldman championed his emphasis on the autonomy of "the unique one" as necessarily relevant to anarchists and intrinsically connected to her own endeavors.

Rather than being a heretical diversion from the principles of anarcho-communism, she understood the lively ideas found in Stirner's 1844 book, *The Ego and His Own*, to be an essential complement to Peter Kropotkin's subsequent 1902 treatise, *Mutual Aid*.

In Goldman's anarchist synthesis, Stirner's idea of a "union of egos" offered a miniature example of Kropotkin's later more communitarian discussion of mutual aid as an anarchist social process. Similarly, Stirner's concern with a loss of individual agency meshed with her own opposition to the mass tyranny of what she referred to in the essay published in the pamphlet as a "subdued and hypnotized" populace.

The latter being in thrall to that consenting oligarchy known as democracy in the USA of her time and which, within the fortified walls of

Trumplandia, today reeks of a fetid patriotic flatulence and smacks of a triumphalist fascism on the rise. For Goldman, cultivating the self-expressive consciousness of the masterless individual was an antidote to such self-imposed subservience and socially-reinforced compliance to authority.

Better yet, it did not necessarily exclude the cooperative possibilities of "voluntary association" for mutual benefit and was not predicated on a sacrifice of one's individuality at the altar of collectivity. Indeed, as Goldman would note with reference to egoism in the context of the International Anarchist Congress of 1907, "Collective activity in no way denies individual action; on the contrary, they complete each other".

Ultimately, though not naive about the practical problems

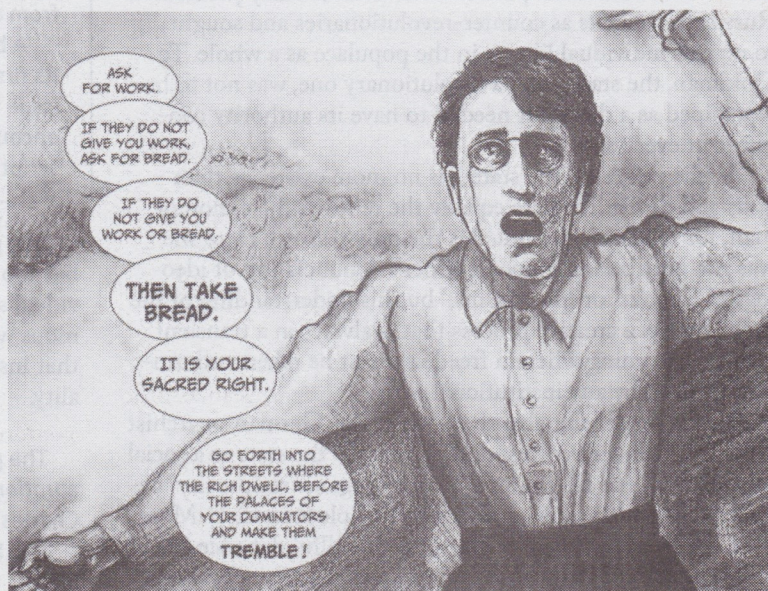


Illustration by David Lester, from his graphic novel (in progress) on the last year of Emma Goldman's life in Toronto, Canada, in 1940. davidlesterartmusicdesign.wordpress.com

involved in achieving such a completion, it was the search for anarchic confluences between individualism and communism that animated Goldman's life.

In the preface to her 1917 book, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, Goldman would distinguish the anarchic nature of Stirner's individualism from the bourgeois individualism that she contrasted unfavorably with individuality. As she glowingly stated therein, "Stirner's individualism contains the greatest possibilities" because in her mind the anarchist essence of his individualism resonated with her own insistence upon individual liberty.

Similarly, to Goldman, Nietzsche's concept of "beyond good and evil" encouraged one to assert their individuality rather than succumb to the debilitating slave mentality demanded by social conformity. Here, her invocation of Stirner's notion of "ownness" joins with Nietzsche's conceptualization of the individual will outside the confines of what she mocked as the "lie" of conventional morality. It is with this philosophical conjunction in mind that she insistently raised her concerns about the necessity of including a frank exploration of free love and sexual radicalism (including queerness) in anarchist discourse and practice.

Goldman was imprisoned by the state for her opposition to the First World War and then deported to her native Russia in 1919 during the early days of the Soviet revolution. That makes 2019 the 100th anniversary of the use by the US government of that ignominious Red Scare tactic of scapegoating, incarcerating and repatriating immigrants deemed to be undesirable for political reasons (the ICE-y fingers of which still crawl up the racist spine of the American body politic today).

Once exiled there, Goldman quickly became disillusioned with the Soviet police state which brutally persecuted Russian anarchists as counter-revolutionaries and sought to repress individual liberty in the populace as a whole. To Goldman, the state, even a revolutionary one, was not to be worshiped as a deity but needed to have its authority contested at every turn.

As she posited, "The state has no more existence than gods and devils. They are equally the reflex and creation of man; for man, the individual is the only reality". Here she was not only building upon Stirner's denunciation of ideological "spooks" or "phantasms," but his understanding of the individual as a creative process that is always in a transient state of becoming wherein freedom must be taken and cannot be given by any institutional entity.

In this sense, she also drew upon the German anarchist Gustav Landauer's corresponding idea of "the state as a social relationship" and his championing of "organic reciprocity" between individuals as an organizing principle for society. Moreover, she was enamored by the sense of willful defiance found in Nietzsche's Dionysian dance of iconoclastic individuality.

New Magazines Against Civilization

Backwoods, Spring 2019, offers readers a discourse on anti-civilization thought and "autochthonous anarchy."

Comprised of several central essays, including an impassioned and scathing examination of the atheist-materialist worldview by Backwoods editor Bellamy Fitzpatrick in "What Does the World Desire?," the 72-page journal presents both practical and theoretical considerations in a well designed format.

Benjamin Weiss informs us that the dominant design paradigm in permaculture is perhaps critically flawed. Included in the magazine is a robust series of correspondences from readers, as well as a detailed interview with one of the primary proponents of Vegan Anarcho-Primitivism, Layla AbdelRahim.

The interview is emblematic of what is best about Backwoods, impassioned dialogue about critical issues, always with an eye for implementation and with the goal of living outside and against civilization.

Order from Backwoods, POB 238, Poestenkill NY 12140, \$10 each issue; \$15 for year. Cash only.

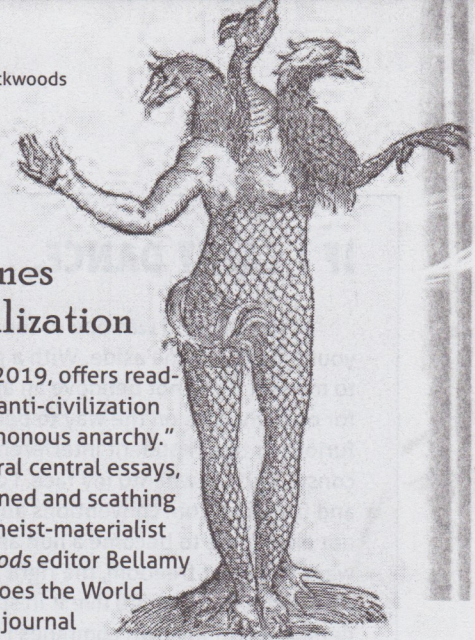
Oak is a non-sectarian anarchist journal against civilization. Focusing on strategy, subsistence and living experience, Oak aims to capture the most important and vibrant tendencies towards a world (or worlds) free from civilization.

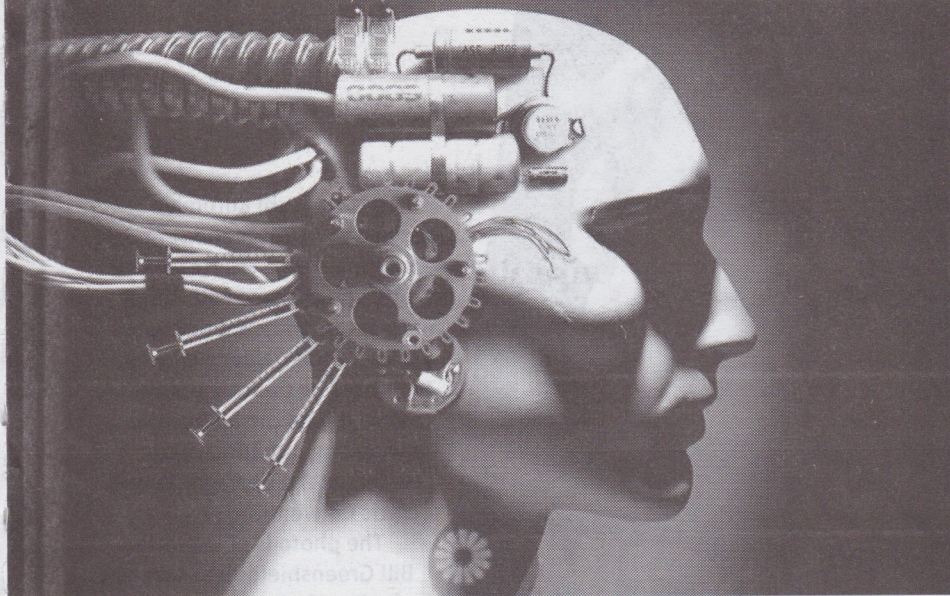
A bi-annual publication premiering in early 2020, its first issue will be "Perpetual Apocalypse." Each print issue will also be curated in audiozine format. Oak encourages your communication, submissions and subscriptions. Oakjournal.org

We need her words now more than ever when anarchy has too often become rife with factionalism between individualists and communarians rather than being synonymous with an appreciation of the many-splendored spirit that inspires the marvelous dance of anarchy and individuality.

The pamphlet *The Individual, Society and the State: In Celebration of Emma Goldman's 150th Birthday* is available from Charles H. Kerr Publishers, Chicago.

Ron Sakolsky publishes the *Oystercatcher* on Denman Island, British Columbia, and is a frequent Fifth Estate contributor.





Transhumanism? Apocalypse Soon?

JOHN ZERZAN

Transhumanism, which rarely rates a mention in the media, suddenly had a brief moment of infamy recently due to the reported interest in it by the late, evil, child sex trafficker, Jeffrey Epstein.

Transhumanism claims that by utilizing technology it can artificially enhance the human body, and, if pursued far enough, will solve everything including victory over death, as futurist Ray Kurzweil and others promise. It involves a headlong leap of faith, viewing advanced technology as a transcendent breakthrough. Bioethicist Amy Michelle Debaets termed transhumanism "the Rapture of the geeks."

There are grounds for imagining transhumanism becoming much more mainstream. For one thing, we live in desperate times, in an ever more technological world. It is already apparent that technology now makes claims and promises that political ideology once provided. The political has faded hugely, so people turn elsewhere for help with their lives, present and future.

Technology has stepped into this vacuum with full force, and shows no signs of diminishing in its impact. Trans-

humanism is an extreme outgrowth, but certainly shares roots with the idea that technology is linked to human betterment. Transhumanism derives from the projections of Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment. The Brave New World of techno-science will banish superstition and intolerance. It will save us.

Luciana Parisi, who writes about technology in culture, aesthetics and politics, notes that this new approach that began half a millennium ago, was comprised of tools, but involved much more, amounting to a "new means of governance."

Now, transhumanism points to a technological singularity, a point when technology reaches a plateau of such qualitative power defined by development of artificial general intelligence that it creates a "runaway reaction" of self-improvement cycles so as to Fix Everything. With that threshold, technology defines all and overcomes any problems.

Never mind the fact that as technology has raced forward since its earliest development, almost everything has gotten worse: rising suicide rates, more chronic illness, declining lifespans, for example. Not everything should be seen in the light of over-arching

technology, but it does proclaim itself to really have all the answers. We are arguably closing in on cyborg status, already somewhat transhuman in a prosthetic life-world. More and more, we depend on implants, drugs, and the rest of high-tech engineering.

Politically, transhumanism tends toward libertarianism, but there is at least one leftist version, which is Fully Automated Luxury Communism(!) put forth in a manifesto by Aaron Bastani, from Britain's Novara Media. FALC, which announces it is "beyond work, scarcity and capitalism," is very optimistic regarding the technological miracles of the techno-future, with most of the same delusions and huge blind spots as transhumanism in general.

Setting the stage for transhumanist advance on a more basic level is the sense that a tech future is inevitable, inescapable. McKenzie Wark, author of *A Hacker Manifesto* and *Gamer Theory*, advocates a cyborg future for us all, noting that "the time for extracting ourselves from techno-modernity as a radical act has passed"—as if she ever questioned techno-modernity, radically or otherwise.

In the August 2019 edition of *The Atlantic*, war criminal Henry Kissinger and two co-authors announced, "The Metamorphosis," the "unstoppable" artificial intelligence/algorithm revolution that we must adjust to. Similarly, in a conversation with Donna Haraway, Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department at U-C, Santa Cruz, counseled me to play the game and not oppose it.

There seems to be a strange emptiness regarding the promises of Savior Technology. It claims to free us from so much, even death, but what it is for is not on offer except as a merely technological transaction.

How much is deeply missing when technology is the be-all and end-all of existence, the measure of every so-called advance?

John Zerzan writes frequently for the Fifth Estate. JohnZerzan.net

Will there be a new military draft?

Why should we care?

EDWARD HASBROUCK

There's been little public notice, but the U.S. is on the verge of its first major national debate about military conscription since the early 1980s.

A bipartisan National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (NCMNPS) appointed in late 2016 by lame-duck President Obama and Congressional leaders has been studying whether the current requirement for all young men to register with the Selective Service System (SSS) for a possible military draft should be ended entirely, extended to young women as well as young men, or replaced with some other system of (possibly compulsory) military and/or civilian national service. (See "A New Right for Women: Eligible for the U.S. War Machine", Fifth Estate, Winter 2017.)

The NCMNPS will release its recommendations in March 2020, and Congress is likely to take up the issue after the 2020 elections.

What does this debate tell us about the state of the empire and its war plans? Will the government need a draft to fight its wars? And, if an actual draft is unlikely, why should anarchists or other anti-war activists care about draft registration?

Modern high-tech war-making calls for fewer soldiers with more specialized skills. Even some hawks see a cannon-fodder draft as obsolete or unnecessary, although some of them call for a special-skills draft (like the Doctor Draft during past wars) that would target people with cyber, STEM, and language skills as well as health care workers.

The SSS already maintains contingency plans for a Health Care Personnel Delivery System for workers in 57 occupational categories: nurses, dietitians, physical therapists, veterinary technicians, etc. The NCMNPS was specifically ordered by Congress to consider whether this should be expanded to

other occupations.

Some supporters of war and the draft think that draft registration has become more trouble than it's worth. Former Selective Service Director Bernie Rostker, who oversaw the resumption of draft registration in 1980, came out of retirement to tell the NCMNPS that it's time to end draft registration. The current database of registrants would be "less than useless" as the basis for sending out induction notices (because so many registrants have moved without notifying the SSS), Rostker said. Trying to make women register would cause too many additional problems.

Members of the NCMNPS struggled to come up with plausible scenarios for when a draft might be needed. During one of the hearings at which I testified, Joe Heck, Chair of the NCMNPS (a former Republican congressman from Nevada, and Army Reserve Brigadier General) asked me what I would do if "we're in a Red Dawn scenario, we're being attacked through both Canada and Mexico," and there aren't enough volunteers to defend the U.S.?

It was the first time a draft resister was invited to tell Federal officials what they should do about the draft since David Harris testified at a Senate hearing in 1972.

The current Selective Service Director, Don Benton, an incompetent and corrupt early Trump supporter appointed to the position as a political sinecure where it was thought he could do little damage, and witnesses from the military and hawkish think tanks were unable, even under questioning by the NCMNPS, to say in what circumstances a draft would be needed.

But these same witnesses – except Rostker – told the



In 1968, Kiyoshi Kuromiya designed this poster and sent orders by mail. He was arrested by the FBI and charged with sending indecent material through the Post Office. Later that year, after beating the charges, Kuromiya defied the authorities by handing out 2000 of the posters at the Chicago Democratic Convention.

The photo is of Detroit Bill Greenshields was taken at random during a 1967 March on the Pentagon and used by Kuromiya. Although the FBI hounded Greenshields for draft card burning, he remains unrepentant.

NCMNPS that draft registration should continue, even if they can't imagine when a draft would actually be necessary for one or more of these reasons:

1. Draft registration is "America's insurance policy."

Militarists are telling the truth when they say that they don't want a draft. A draft is Plan F for "fallback," after Plan A (active-duty enlistees), Plan B (Reserves), Plan C (National Guard), Plan D (proxy warriors, a/k/a allied forces), and Plan E (mercenaries, a/k/a civilian security contractors). But it's the availability of the draft as a fallback that allows the government to contemplate endless unpopular wars without having to consider limits of scope, duration, targeting, or the willingness of people to fight.

A draft avoids the need to sell the war to the public, persuade people to enlist, or wait for them to do so – during which time they might figure out that the "existential threat" (the Vietnamese Navy in the Tonkin Gulf, Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, etc.) doesn't exist or isn't what it's been made out to be.

Without the draft as a fallback option, the government would have to recognize an entirely new set of constraints on its plans and ability to wage war.

2. Draft registration symbolizes and reinforces the duty of the individual to serve the state.

The NCMNPS has defined its goal as the creating of a culture and expectation of "service." To put it in anarchist terms, draft registration is a symbolic ritual that inculcates the fascist ideal that the government determines what values people should serve, rather than serving people and their values.

3. Channeling: Draft registration channels the government's subjects into the roles and tasks – civilian and/or military – that the government decides will best serve its interests.

Much of the discussion of "service" by the NCMNPS was devoted to how the current Selective Service registration system could be modified, or with what sort of scheme it could be replaced, to channel more young people into doing what the government wants them to do.

Some members of the NCMNPS, and some witnesses at its hearings, had a fourth reason to support continuing draft registration and expanding it to women as well as men:

4. Requiring women to register for the draft would more fully integrate women into the military and the system of war-making.

But as the feminist antiwar organization CODEPINK said in a statement submitted to the NCMNPS, "Women's equality will not be achieved by including women in a draft system. It is irresponsible for the fight for women's rights to seek equal moral injury, equal PTSD, equal brain injury, equal

**The man in the
"Fuck the Draft" poster,
Bill Greenshields**

DM: So let's start at the [Pentagon] protest itself. Do you know who shot the picture?

Bill Greenshield: I have no idea who took the picture or how I was selected to be on a poster. I had no knowledge of it until an article in the May 1968 *The Fifth Estate*.

DM: The look on your face in that poster is a little demented.

BG: Yeah, like there's this GLEE of some kind! That's probably why it was selected, but you gotta remember, I had just climbed this rope after walking from the Lincoln Monument to the Pentagon, and so I probably WAS really enjoying burning that card at the time.

The full interview is at DangerousMinds.Net.



suicide rates, equal lost limbs, or equal violent tendencies that military veterans suffer from. When it comes to the military, women's equality is better served by ending draft registration for everyone."

All of this should give anarchists and many others sufficient reasons to oppose draft registration: to impose limits on war planning and war making, to end a ritual reinforcer of state paramouncy, to expand the freedom of young people to make their own choices, and to avoid subjecting women to even more of the burdens of war and conscription.

Finally, there's a fifth, unstated reason that statists want to retain draft registration:

5. Ending registration would be a demonstration of the government's failure, and an object lesson in the power of popular resistance.

Registration became unenforceable in the face of quiet but widespread noncompliance. Statists are loath to admit that their power is limited by the willingness of the people to submit and obey, but the failure of draft registration – which would be made evident by its repeal – could empower and inspire other acts of resistance, especially by young people.

Edward Hasbrouck is an anarchist, pacifist, and ally of youth liberation. His "service" was four and a half months in prison in 1983-1984 for organizing resistance to draft registration. He maintains a web site of information about the draft, draft registration, and draft resistance at Resisters.info.

IWW Takes on the Freelance Journalist Gig Economy

KAMAL ISLAM

The role of technology in social and class struggles has long been debated among opponents of capitalism and the state.

But one of the newest branches of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Freelance Journalists' Union, or IWW-FJU, shows that digital praxis, coupled with the radical labor organization's century-old model of organizing, offers even the most precarious workers new possibilities for resistance to their century-old enemy: the employing class.

Such was the case in June, when the IWW-FJU took to social media to reach freelancers for Vox media, the liberal conglomerate that includes their flagship site known for its narrative/explainer-style coverage of socio-cultural subject matter, as well as digital verticals like Curbed (Real Estate), Eater (Food), SB Nation (Sports), and the Verge (Tech).

In May, Vox published Alexia Fernandez Campbell's article "The recession hasn't ended for gig economy workers." Its conclusions were self-evident for most of us, with the possible exception of the rich liberals who run digital media, and occupy most senior editorial positions. Trying to exist in the gig economy – whether you're a freelance journalist, a Seamless delivery person, or an Uber driver – is a constant struggle for material security and financial independence, in stark contrast to the myth of the self-reliant independent contractor. Quite often, in fact, they are trapped by the conditions of their employment.

At the time of the article's publication, freelance contributors to Vox and its affiliates were prohibited from publicly sharing their rates by their contract provisions, a clause designed to allow commissioning editors to offer writers and photographers the absolute least they could.

The FJU issued a call for Vox freelancers to anonymously submit their rates, and received 48 responses in total. Some respondents were being paid as little as \$0.10 a word for feature length articles requiring heavy reporting. As Rolling Stone contributor Molly Crabapple notes on the FJU's website, these rates can often amount to as little as \$1 an hour.

On August 16, Vox announced that it eliminated the provisions of its freelance agreement that prohibited contractors from disclosing and dis-



cussing rates. It was a victory for Vox contributors, and the IWW-FJU. But the fundamental reality of life as a freelance journalist, and the contracts that govern them, remain the same for most writers.

Freelancers submit their pitches for articles "on spec," that is, at the whim of editors, who sometimes reject or ignore the submission only to steal it themselves. If a pitch is accepted, a writer then works for a flat rate agreed upon at the outset of their assignment, inclusive of multiple drafts, hours of reporting, interviewing, transcription, and editing.

Editors are then free to reject a final draft as they see fit. Most outlets only

accept invoices for payment once an article is published, and terms allow for payment months after an invoice is submitted. Even then, some outlets simply won't pay unless threatened with legal action.

This is the distinctly un-sexy reality of life as a journalist, the supposed guardians of truth in capitalist society.

A decade ago, the revolutionary potential of mass movements linked with technology was heralded by many as a threat to authoritarian rule and even to capitalism itself.

Social media was the new printing press, and the Protestant Reformation had a modern analogue in the Arab Spring, the European anti-austerity movement, and Occupy.

Today, it feels as though we are living in the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and that the wave of authoritarian populists sweeping the globe have harnessed the power of technology to secure power, and even commit unspeakable acts of violence against the powerless.

In its earliest days, the IWW stood out within the labor movement for its advocacy of industrial sabotage, a tactic embraced by various movements throughout the 20th century, from the Italian Autonomists of the 1970s, to the Greek anarchists of the modern era.

The IWW-FJU is fighting for the ability of people to tell the truth in our society, using its principles of horizontal organizing and direct action, along with 21st century tactics. Eventually, however, all such organizing will face the fundamental choice of whether to struggle for or against work itself, and the question of what post-work journalism might look like.

More info on the FJU is at freelance-journalistsunion.org. Email contact: freelancejournalists@iww.org

Kamal Islam is a freelance journalist from Michigan.

An Anarchist Review of Books

Ideas without action is passivity; action without ideas leads nowhere



Raging Against the Machine at the Dawn of the Anthropocene

Red Round Globe Hot Burning: A Tale at the Crossroads of Commons and Closure, of Love and Terror, of Race and Class, and of Kate and Ned Despard

Peter Linebaugh

University of California Press, 2019

JOHN CLARK

The title of this fascinating and inspiring work comes from visionary poet William Blake (1757-1827). In one of his most memorable passages, Blake writes that “They told me that I had five senses to enclose me up,/ And they inclos’d my infinite brain into a narrow circle,/ And sunk my heart into the Abyss, a red round globe hot burning/ Till all from life I was obliterated and erased.”

In this passage, Blake writes of the descent into the abyss of spiritlessness, the result of Civilization’s narrow, dualistic,

and reductionist view of reality.

But as Peter Linebaugh points out, the “red round globe hot burning” can also refer to our new abysmal age, the Anthropocene, which we might more accurately call the Necrocene, the new era of global warming and mass extinction, which has resulted from the triumph of capitalism, the state, patriarchy, and mechanization. Finally, Linebaugh also notes, the phrase can refer to the inflammatory revolutionary struggles across the globe that fight the fire of planetary destruction with the fire of universal liberation.

Red Round Globe Hot Burning is a far-ranging and fascinating account of a crucial period at the end of the 18th century and dawn of the 19th in the history of the destruction of the commons, the privatizing of traditional common land, and the quest to preserve and reinstitute it. At the center of this account, we discover the story of Ned and Kate Despard, iconic figures who have appeared in some of

Linebaugh's previous works.

Ned was born in rural Ireland in 1751 and was eventually sent as a British soldier, engineer, and colonial administrator to Jamaica, Honduras and Belize to represent the forces of Empire. However, his life was transformed, first through his encounter with, and radicalization by, the communal traditions of colonized and enslaved peoples, and secondly, by his meeting Kate, a gifted African-American woman who became his life partner, inspiration, and fellow revolutionary. Their saga ends in 1803 with Ned's arrest, hanging, and decapitation before a crowd of 20,000 for allegedly plotting to ignite a popular revolution by seizing the Tower of London and Bank of England and killing the King, and with Kate pleading his case and helping write his moving gallows speech.

Linebaugh is wise to give such a central place in this history to Ned and Kate. They fit the true definition of revolutionaries, "a man and a woman consciously working with others to change the course of history to obtain specific goals." We are desperately in need of their inspiration, their revolutionary fire, as we now face the choice between revolutionary transformation, and not only barbarism, but also extinction.

We have gone through two world-historical revolutions (the agricultural and the industrial) as the *objects* of world historical developments. We are now faced with the challenge of fundamentally changing the course of world history for the first time through conscious human activity, that is, as *agents* of universal revolution. Ned and Kate give us a model of the quest for such agency.

It is impossible to summarize briefly the enormously rich content of this work, so I will merely hint at it by noting a few of my own favorite parts. One is its recognition and documentation of the place of indigenous society in preserv-

ing the commons and inspiring recommunization.

Linebaugh cites an observer of the Miskito indigenous commons that directly inspired Ned Despard: "These Indians live under an almost perfect equality, and there are no rich or poor among them. They do not strive to accumulate, and the great unwearied exertion, found among our civilized societies, is unknown among them." Another observer remarks that "they live under the most perfect equality, and hence are not impelled to industry by that spirit of emulation which, in society, leads to great and unwearied exertion." Indeed, they regarded the lives of the struggling colonists with "pity or contempt."

Iroquois leader Joseph Brant makes the case eloquently for indigenous society as the truly free one. He explains that "we have no law but that written on the heart of every rational creature by the immediate finger of the great Spirit of the universe himself. We have no prisons—we have no pompous parade of courts." He argues that "to a rational creature, liberty as much exceeds property, as the light of the sun does that of the most twinkling star, but you put them on a level, to the everlasting disgrace of civilization."

Linebaugh also cites the rich legacy of the commons that was still alive in the Ireland of Ned Despard. Among its many living forms was the custom of "hasty diggings." In it, the local community comes together *en masse* to aid the persecuted, imprisoned or needy at the crucial moment of the harvest, demonstrating strikingly the true meaning and power of what Proudhon called "collective force."

In one example, "fifteen hundred people dug Samuel Neilson's potatoes 'in seven minutes,'" in another, "a thousand dug the potatoes of a jailed shoemaker," and in yet another, "two hundred people dug 'upwards of 400 bushels of potatoes' in two hours and fourteen minutes."

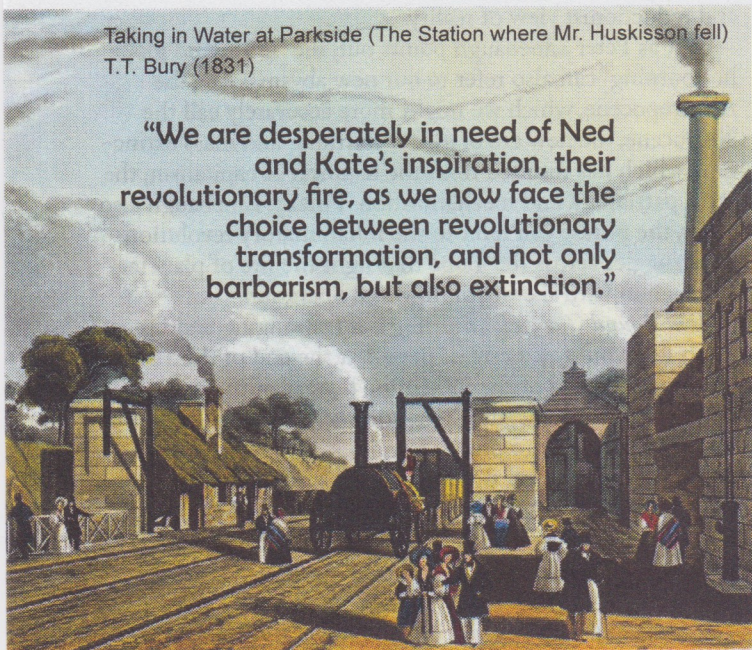
Linebaugh's account shows that the period's revolutionary movement contained the seeds of later eco-communitarianism and radical social ecological politics. For example, William Covel fought enclosure and developed a comprehensive communitarian vision in which division of labor would be overcome, and citizens would live in "small communities of a hundred houses and forty families on one or two thousand acres." In such communities "the 'gifts of nature' were not bought and sold" and "the resources used by handicrafts were 'a common stock.'"

In 1793, Scottish radical communitarian and revolutionary martyr John Oswald published a work in revolutionary France proposing a system of "direct democracy based on neighborhood assemblies." In them, "people might debate such questions as 'Whether the land should be cultivated in common, or divided equally between the individuals of the nation.'"

Linebaugh's discussions of prisons are among the most fascinating and enlightening in the book. Go to Linebaugh

Taking in Water at Parkside (The Station where Mr. Huskisson fell)
T.T. Bury (1831)

"We are desperately in need of Ned and Kate's inspiration, their revolutionary fire, as we now face the choice between revolutionary transformation, and not only barbarism, but also extinction."



rather than Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, if you want a real insight into the "birth of the prison." While he abundantly demonstrates its brutality and oppressiveness, Linebaugh also relates the manner in which radicalism infiltrated it, and, in some ways, subverted its hierarchical and disciplinary aspirations.

He notes that at King's Bench Prison in London, "debtors held the keys to their own rooms. Those on the common side and those on the masters' side both had their own organization. The latter, called "the college," held general assemblies and controlled the allotment of rooms."

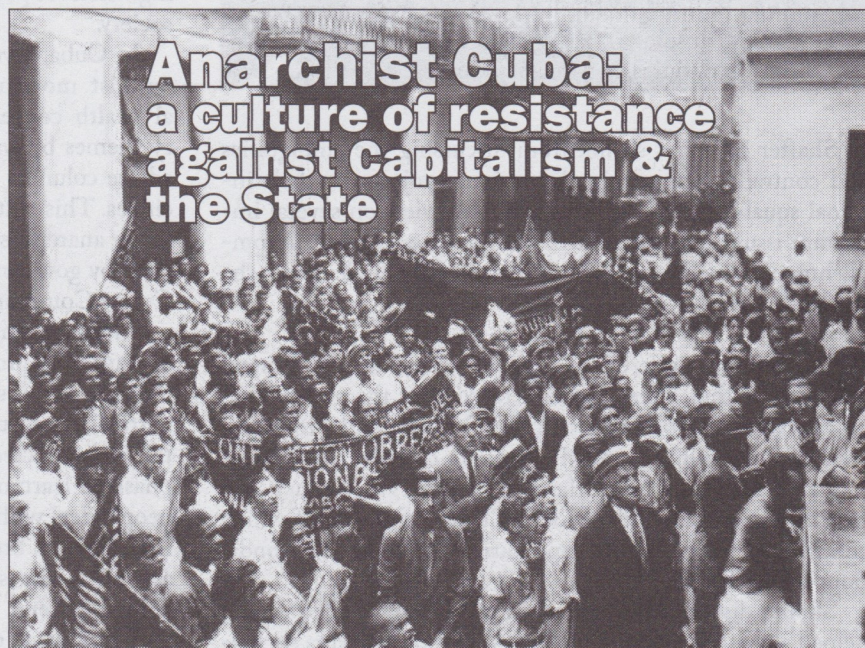
But more astoundingly, prisoners at the New York debtors' prison created "a shadow republic," with processes for "electing officers, assigning rooms, organizing cleanliness, and settling disputes, all according to a book of Constitution." Such accounts pose the question: are we today still capable of establishing the level of direct democracy in our daily lives that these prisoners achieved in theirs?

In Ned (and Kate) Despard's gallows speech, Ned expressed trust that "the principles of freedom, of humanity, and of justice will triumph over falsehood, tyranny, and delusion." Linebaugh's invaluable work records the stories we need most to hear if this triumph is to take place.

These are the stories that might re-awaken our spirit of revolt, re-creation, and regeneration, as we face new onslaughts of falsehood, tyranny and delusion, and as we begin to recognize the intolerable and ultimately genocidal and ecocidal costs of enclosure and the loss of the commons.

John Clark is a communitarian anarchist activist and theorist. He is director of La Terre Institute for Community and Ecology, which sponsors educational and organizational programs in New Orleans and on an 88-acre site on Bayou La Terre in the forest of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

His latest book is *Between Earth and Empire: From the Necrocene to the Beloved Community* from PM Press.



1933 Cuban General Strike. The bloody regime of dictator Gerardo Machado came to an end when a general strike paralyzed the economy. A last minute deal he made with the Cuban Communist Party failed to save the regime and Machado fled into exile.

Anarchist Cuba: Countercultural Politics in the Early Twentieth Century

Kirwin Shaffer
PM Press 2019

SK

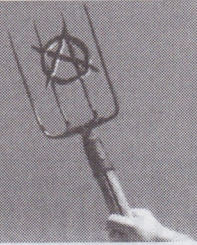
"...these anarchist rebels took part in a long tradition of imagining Cuba as an 'island of dreams' where humanity could create a free, healthy, educated, and egalitarian beacon for global liberation."

— Kirwin Shaffer

Kirwin Shaffer's new book helps readers understand what being an anarchist has meant in Cuba during the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Previous histories by other authors about anarchists on the island have concentrated on their participation in the urban and rural labor movement. However, in this book, Shaffer, a professor of Latin American studies at Pennsylvania State University, Berks College, explores several additional areas of involvement outside the workplace during the past 150 years.

He describes the development of various projects during this period, including writing and publishing of anarchist inspired fiction and nonfiction, producing radical theater, visual art, music, alternative health clinics, as well as schools for both children and adults free of state and religious control and specifically dedicated to encouraging independent thinking. Participants pooled their knowledge from a variety of backgrounds—women and men, old and young, black and white, Cuban and foreign-born, skilled and unskilled workers, poets, shopkeepers, playwrights, and librarians. >>>>>

As long as anarchist rebels in Cuba are able to dream of and create autonomous, non-authoritarian projects, the future holds multiple possibilities



Shaffer does not shrink from discussing the ambiguities and contradictions within the various projects, or their internal squabbles and differing points of view on several important issues. His care not to idealize or exaggerate accomplishments enables readers to more easily understand the dynamics involved.

The various undertakings are described in the context of how they were intended to counter the authoritarian character and brutalities of the Catholic and Protestant churches, the military and the Spanish colonial administration that held sway until the end of the 19th century, and then the nominally independent Cuban state—all of which contributed to the highly exploitative and repressive conditions on the island.

Shaffer discusses how anarchist projects responded to, and helped shape the popular understanding of concepts such as freedom, equality, identity, and progress. Part of this involved fighting against racism, for women's equality, and uniting the working-class across racial, national, and gender lines. By the 1890s, Shaffer tells us, anarchists in the Cuban labor movement were able to play a major role in fostering class ties among people of diverse origins and race, as well as in excluding party affiliation from union activities.

He also delineates the major differences between anarchist and Marxist groups, which were active in Cuba from the 19th century on, especially the strategies for dissent each chose. Marxists concentrated on building organizations to train and guide/supervise the proletariat at the work place, in daily life, and at the ballot box. The anarchists were strongly committed to means that coincided with desired future ends, such as encouraging the independence and self-activity of students and workers while fighting against unjust working and living conditions.

They recognized the struggle against domination as connected to the immediate construction of the means of resistance. Anarchists designed their projects specifically to improve the lives of women, men and children in the present as well as to prepare them for a social transformation sometime in the future.

Shaffer devotes three chapters to exploring the anarcho-naturist influence among Cuban anarchists. The naturist movement, which developed in Europe and North America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focused on alternative personal health and lifestyle practices, such as adopting a simple, inexpensive and nutritious vegetarian diet, getting lots of outdoor exercise, practicing nudism, living in small villages where everyone can know each other, and do-

ing whatever possible to combat the effects of industrial mass society.

In Cuba, several anarchist writers and artists shifted the naturist movement's focus away from primarily individual health concerns to an emphasis on social emancipatory themes by writing news stories, essays, novels, plays and advice columns that were widely available beyond anarchist circles. This cultural influence persisted into the 1950s even as the anarcho-syndicalist movement was significantly weakened by government repression and the consolidation of the Cuban Communist Party.

Although anarchists from all tendencies were interested in ways to improve health, anarcho-syndicalists (especially in the cafe and restaurant unions) and anarcho-naturists were particularly focused on aspects of daily life that disproportionately affected the young and the working poor. They emphasized learning and teaching alternative medicine to help people deal with health problems of modern society, including ill-health brought about by harsh factory and field work, as well as diseases caused by cramped and poorly ventilated living quarters.

Some went even further and offered deep criticisms of modern civilization—sometimes from an idealized perspective on pre-modern conditions and other times from a more sophisticated point of view involving a critique of the modern city as the direct consequence of industrial exploitation of the natural world, approaching the breaking point.

Other anarchists criticized what they viewed as the anarcho-naturists' idealization of nature, and the concepts of what were supposedly nature's laws as tending toward mystification.

Although they were internationalists, many anarchists played a significant part in inspiring and fighting for Cuban independence from Spanish colonialism in the 1890s. It was their hope that the struggle against injustice and imperialism would be the prelude to a domestic and later international social revolution.

Some anarchists warned it was a mistake to put hope in a nationalist struggle. Sadly, the U.S. government with the cooperation of local Cuban elites proved them correct. After the war of independence, capitalist exploitation on the island was intensified.

Nevertheless, anarchists in Cuba continued their various projects, advocating decentralized self-organization, and challenging the authoritarian practices of the foreign and domestic elites who were blocking the way to the broad social change that so many desired. They continued to criticize centralization and the concentration of wealth, along with the degradation of the environment and human physical and mental health caused by the greed of those in power.

There were major crackdowns against radical activities in Cuba from 1914 on, and the anarchist movement was severe-

ly impacted. However, anarchists continued to be influential because they refused to compromise with the ruling powers, persisting in militantly advocating and disseminating perspectives that challenge their authority.

On the other hand, beginning in the 1920s operatives of the Cuban Communist Party (Partido Socialista Popular, PSP) chose to make compromises with the various dictatorial governments in order to be allowed control of the labor unions and other perks. The Communist-dominated Cuban Workers Confederation (Confederación de Trabajadores de Cuba, CTC) purged anarchists and other militant labor activists.

In response, anarchists formed the Libertarian Association of Cuba (Asociación Libertaria de Cuba, ALC) in 1943. The ALC challenged the government and the Communists, while working to resurrect independence and autonomy within the labor movement. In the 1950s, the ALC joined other revolutionary groups in armed resistance to the dictatorship.

By the time that Castro's men landed in Cuba in 1956, the ALC had groups functioning throughout Cuba—in Havana, Pinar del Rio, San Cristobal, Artemisa, Ciego de Avila, and Manzanillo. Anarchists challenged the dictatorship in the cities through their participation in revolutionary movements such as the Directorio Revolucionario and the Federation of University Students.

In addition, the ALC meeting hall became a center for the distribution of information related to the struggle as well as a place where some of Castro's July 26th Movement members trained to use firearms.

In response, the right-wing Batista dictatorship imprisoned, disappeared, and tortured ALC members.

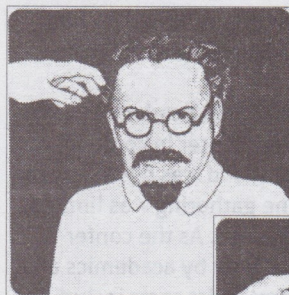
Immediately following Castro's takeover in 1959, anarchists joined in what they hoped would be the long awaited social revolution. But they became increasingly disturbed about the new government's top-down, centralized, bureaucratic solutions to Cuba's pressing social problems.

By March of 1961, it became impossible for anarchists to voice their concerns openly as their publications and organizations were shut down and activists imprisoned. Many, but not all, chose exile where they could continue to openly advocate anarchist alternatives.

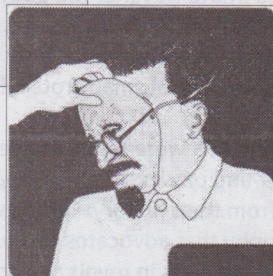
Kirwin Shaffer's contextualized history makes it clear why and how anarchist inspired oppositional activities have never been extinguished on the island, despite ongoing government supervision and surveillance, along with periodic political crackdowns.

As long as anarchist rebels in Cuba are able to dream of and create autonomous, non-authoritarian projects, the future holds multiple possibilities for individual freedom and social solidarity.

SK is a longtime supporter of Cuban anarchists.



Drawings:
Linda Weins



"Trotsky, a complex personality of a peculiarly brittle, scholastic intellect, was the first Stalinist."

—Nov. 1981 #307 Fifth Estate

In Havana? Conference on Trotsky?

PETER WERBE

It seems improbable that a conference was held in Havana last May to examine the life and ideas of the Russian Bolshevik, Leon Trotsky. One would think the Cuban Stalinist bureaucracy would be averse to allowing a gathering sympathetic to the Soviet dictator's arch rival within the Russian ruling clique power struggle that occurred almost 100 years ago.

Perhaps the Cuban government considers Trotsky and his remaining followers almost 80 years after his assassination to be as irrelevant as does most of the world. Those people who even recognize the name, associate it with small, authoritarian Trotskyist cult-like political sects that flit around resistance movements trying to sell their newspapers and recruit members.

The two day conference in the Cuban capital was organized by Frank Garcia Fernandez, a graduate student in sociology, who is writing his PhD on Trotskyism in Cuba.

Garcia said he attributes much of the interest in Trotsky to the popularity of his depiction in Leonardo Padura's 2009 novel about Trotsky and his assassin, Ramon Mercader, *The Man Who Loved Dogs*.

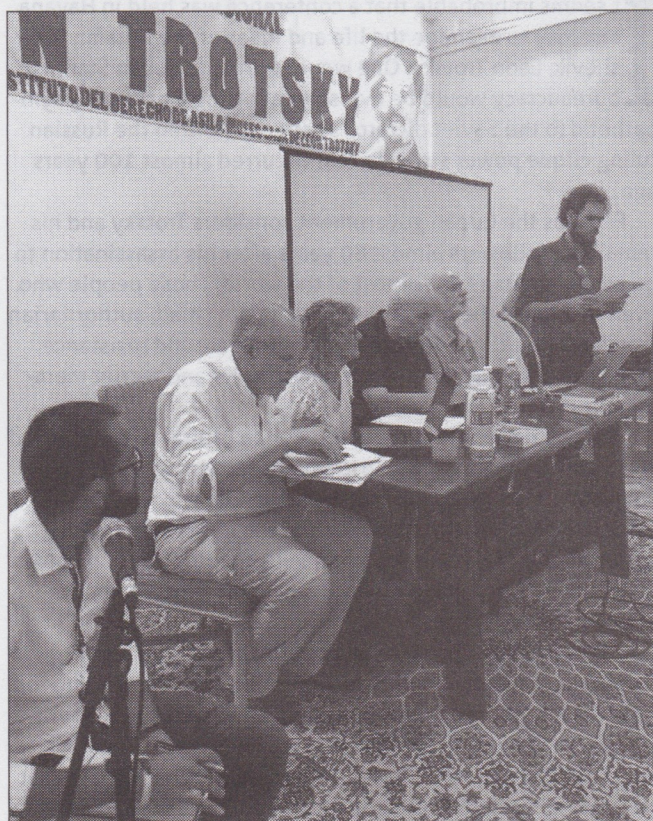
The Spanish author's generous portrayal of the revolutionary hounded by Stalin's secret police who marked him for death as an "enemy of the people," easily gains the reader's sympathy. Only in one sentence does Trotsky veer from his beautiful loser characterization when he says he realizes that he is being hunted by the apparatus he established to destroy

political rivals of the Bolsheviks. Now, it has turned on him, and is finally successful in Mexico as Mercader sinks an axe into Trotsky's skull in 1940.

What was billed as the first International Academic Conference met at the Juan Marinelo Cultural Center in conjunction with the Cuban Institute of Philosophy, and was hosted by the Casa Benito Juarez in Old Havana. The gathering was limited to 80 participants, half Cuban; half foreign. As the conference title suggests, it was attended mainly by academics and representatives from several small Trotskyist sects including ones from the U.S.

Although participants were reportedly ecstatic about the subject matter and presentations, it appears they have learned nothing from their history. For those who adhere to a political philosophy that advocates revolution as requiring the entire working class in revolt against capitalism, but reduce their admiration to One Great Man seems a contradiction they cannot grasp.

The 1917 Russian Revolution was made by a population in revolt against the Czar, class society, and war, not by a cadre of middle-class, Marxist politicians. The Bolsheviks' role was the seizure of the Russian state apparatus, the suppression of all radical opposition movements, and launching of a state capitalist economy. Among the Bolshevik counter-revolution-



Trotsky so vehemently defended the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks, the crushing of opposition to the Soviet state, the militarization of labor, and the bureaucratization process, that even Lenin disassociated himself from him, and Stalin was able to taunt him with being the “patriarch of the bureaucrats.”

—Fifth Estate, Nov. 1981

aries, Trotsky in particular played a murderous role of betrayal in the suppression of a sailor's revolt at the Kronstadt naval base and the destruction of an anarchist peasant movement in Ukraine. The major work of Voline, *The Unknown Revolution: 1917–1921*, available again from PM Press, and *The Bolsheviks & Workers' Control* by Maurice Brinton, from Black Rose Books, both document how Lenin and his cohorts, Stalin and Trotsky, destroyed the revolution and set up a totalitarian police state.

Most Marxists and all Leninists deny this account, but none of them can explain how a mass movement of millions disappears from history after overthrowing the existing order only to be replaced by a power struggle of Great Men, about whom libraries of biographies are published. Had the workers, peasants, and soldiers who made an authentic revolution against capital and the state in Russia not been forced off the field of struggle by leftist politicians, it could have been the point at which the revolutionary project triumphed worldwide.

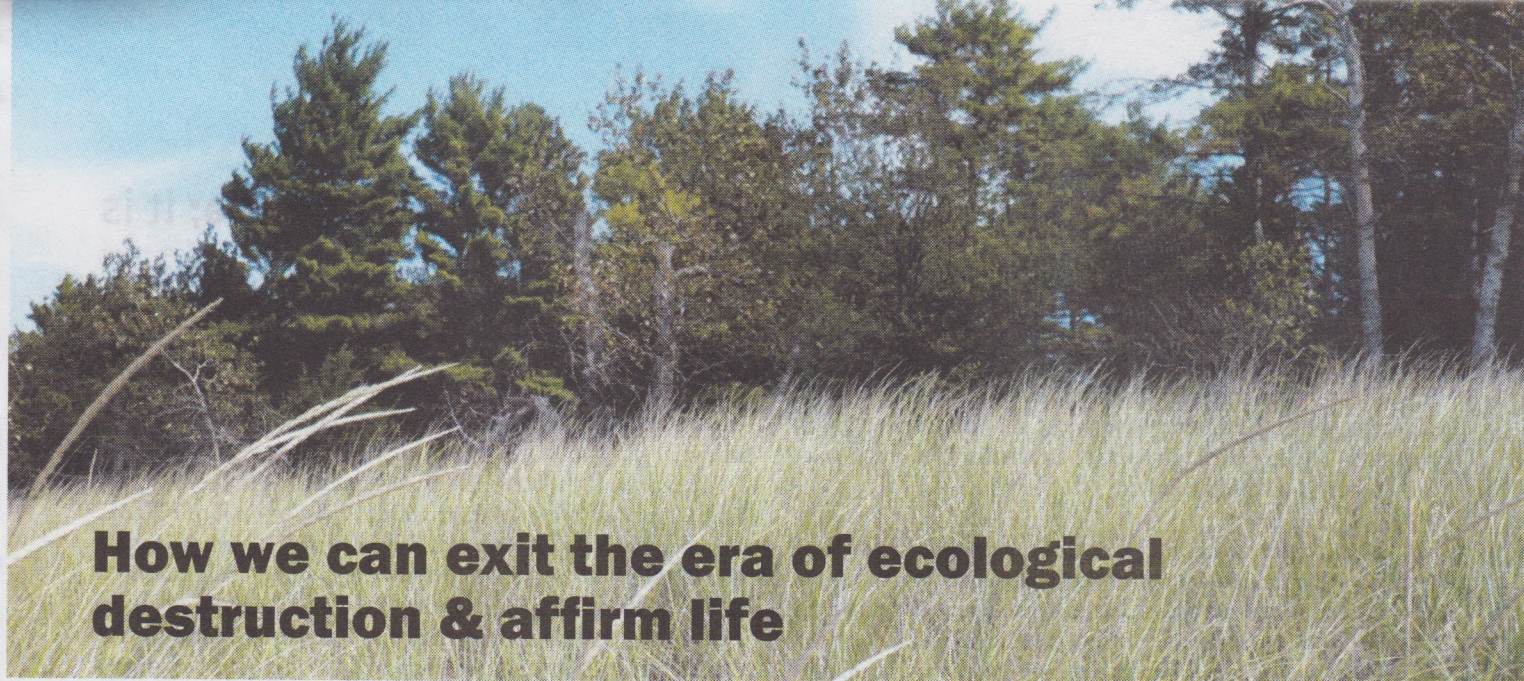
As it was, the Bolshevik seizure of power and the subsequent victory of Stalin over his rivals, including Trotsky, may have very well ended the possibility of a traditional revolution.

So, we say to the Cubans: Forget Trotsky. Remember the mass movement that was extinguished by your own Stalinists, one that is worthy of emulation—the Cuban anarcho-syndicalists who fought Spanish colonists and the Cuban dictators only to finally fall to the repressive hand of the Castro regime.

Time to resume the movement that demands the impossible and make it happen.

Peter Werbe is a member of the Fifth Estate editorial collective. He has despised Trotskyism for a long time.

At the “First International Academic Event on Leon Trotsky” in Havana, May 2019 socialist die-hards celebrate the man who helped destroy the Russian Revolution. No mention of him as a direct precursor of Stalin. We can only hope there won't be another.



How we can exit the era of ecological destruction & affirm life

photo: Peter Werbe

PETER LINEBAUGH

John P. Clark is a major thinker, on a par with Wendell Berry, Thoreau, or Rebecca Solnit. He is an anarchist and an eco-socialist but label not required.

The book under review, *Between Earth and Empire*, expresses the hope and the fear. *From the Necrocene to the Beloved Community* is his subtitle. Necrocene is geological portending death as a result of statist, technocratic, patriarchal society. The beloved community is spiritual. The terms stride the natural and the social.

Clark knows our epoch might also be named anthropocene, capitalocene, and eleutherocene. The beloved community as a phrase originating with Josiah Royce, the philosophical critic of individualism, but Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., gave it historical power.

In addition to a foreword, a preface, an introduction, a postscript, an appendix, and an index, the book contains nineteen chapters on the geographer Elisée Reclus, education, Paris Climate Summit, Hurricane Katrina, Chiapas, Rojava, West Papua, the Black Panthers, Occupation, the Solstice, Buddhism, the Spectacle, Castoriadis, the Situationists, Utopia, and a fantastic conclusion on New Orleans.

The book is dedicated “À LA TERRE.” New Orleans is a French city, entirely to begin with, and later with francophone links to Haiti, the Caribbean, Africa. Given this dedication, no matter how high in the air he soars in flights of imagination, in spiritual strivings, or in theoretical work, we cannot say that it is not grounded.

Clark does not write much about property per se, nor for that matter does he write about race per se,

nor capital or class per se. He writes about liberation, fulfillment of needs, mutuality, and the small community. His writing is very much in the solution, not the problem.

Still, Clark minds his theoretical p’s and q’s. In earlier times he would be called a saint and in times to come he will be called an angel in our movement. He is mindful and dialectical. As a teacher he relies on redundancy and subtlety.

He is an adept. His anarchism is the result of study. Bakunin, Kropotkin, Stirner, Lao Tzu, Godwin, Blake, Gustav Landauer, B. Traven, Nelson Algren, Marcuse, Le Guin. The Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha (self, knowledge, and community, to put it crudely).

Otherwise his anarchism is the result of years, decades of practice. He will not be boxed in. He has a practice on the Bayou La Terre, and an experience of decades of teaching. He attended Friends Meetings; he worked with the Catholic Worker Movement. He lived in India. There is nothing at all rootless in this worldly anarchist philosopher, seeker, or sachem.

He may take us to China and Lao Tzu’s “Way” -

To give birth without taking possession

To act without obligation

To lead without dominating

Or, he may cite Zen Buddhism and its Four Noble Truths. He may give line-by-line interpretation of the Black Panther Party’s Ten Point Program. He has numerical mnemonics of his own in these four: the social institutions, the social imaginary, the social ideology, and the social ethos. He lingers with Rumi and Muhammad.

He acknowledges forbears like Gustav Landauer,

REVIEW:
Between
Earth and
Empire:
From the
Necrocene to
the Beloved
Community
John P. Clark
PM Press
2019
pmpress.org

This book is a **spiritual analysis**; it is a **materialist dharma**; it is both individual and collective.

slain in the Bavarian revolution of 1919. This is a spiritual analysis; it is a materialist dharma; it is both individual and collective. From prophetic wisdom of the axial age to sharp polemical dueling with his peers, Castoriadis, Debord, Bookchin, Clark is a skilled thinker.

As for Turtle Island, he looks to the East and salutes Joel Kovel, or he looks to the West and salutes Gary Snyder. These are spiritual men and practical, incisive social critics in love with the earth and their fellow creatures. As Clark points elsewhere, we look to where he stands—the delta. He is not just from New Orleans, he is of New Orleans, twelve generations back. After reading him we think of the city differently.

Those twelve generations form an historical frame of mind. The noted lepidopterist, Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein (1826-1885) wrote *The Secrets of New Orleans*, a story of mixed race, lesbian love, freedom struggle, black messiah, and total liberation. Lafcadio Hearne (1850-1904), the creole Irishman, who also recounted the crazy patchwork of spirits, ghosts, revenants. Joseph Déjacque (1821-1864) opposed domination in all its forms. Another revolutionary of New Orleans, a sailor, a paper hanger, and an exile from the Paris barricades of 1848, composed *L'Humanisphère* in 1858-9, as “an infernal work, a cry of a rebel slave.” The book begins with a geological question and hypothesis for our times, “Is the terrestrial globe a living being?”

I could not help reading more of Déjacque though Clark does not write about him here. “For me,” Déjacque wrote, “humanity is humanity: I do not establish hierarchic distinctions between the sexes and races, between men and women, between blacks and whites.”

He anticipates class war, “From North to South to East to West the lightning of insurrection will thunder. Proletarian war and servile war will crack the States and the bones of the explorers of those states. The flesh of politicians and industrialists, patrons and masters, shopkeepers and planters will smoke under the bleeding feet of proletarians and of slaves.”

He anticipates civil war, “The monstrous American Union, the fossil Republic, will disappear in the cataclysm. . . Blacks and whites, creoles and redskins will fraternize and found a new and single race. The negrocides and proletricides, the amphibians of liberalism and carnivores of privilege will swivel back like caymans and bears before the progress of social liberty.” He writes before the word “genocide” was coined in 1944. I am not sure it is an improvement over negrocide and proletricide.

The wealth of Turtle Island disgorged here, through the tidal estuary of the American continent. The bloody wealth,

that lily-white cotton, from the plantations all up river, come down the throat to be digested in the capitalist maw, shipped to Europe across waters now thickened with petroleum sludge.

The delta links continental cultural zones. Nelson Algren told a story of New Orleans called *A Walk on the Wild Side*. What made New Orleans wild? It has more in common with the Caribbean. In 1811, Charles Deslondes, then rumored to be Haitian, organized an uprising of 500 slaves to seize New Orleans. You could participate in the African dance and drums on Congo Square as early as 1817. Up and down that long river there's a working-class of permanence despite the plagues, the electric chair, the hurricanes, and the oil spills. That class harks back to the many-headed Hydra, skilled in the arts of getting by and making do. This past is near. Even the graves are famously shallow.

“We created a crack in history,” says his modern day comrade scott crow of the Common Ground Collective, referring to the mutual aid, self-defense, and courage in response to that furious combination of wind, water, negligence, politics, racism, and urbanocide known as Hurricane Katrina. Clark will not claim Katrina to be “the dark night of the soul,” but as a teacher he will observe the benefits of trauma to spiritual (kenosis) and political awakening (mutual aid).

The man is a deadly serious and lively wordsmith. Often Clark presents his ideas by means of etymology, or the history of the word. At other times he finds the English language insufficient and will employ a term from French (*l'entraide*, *détournement*, *dérive*), or Latin (*felix culpa*), or Sanskrit (*anitya*, *samsara*), or Greek (*techne*, *poesis*, *oikos*, *psyche*, *eros*, *thanatos*, *arché*, or *anarché*). He likes to make up words as well or combine old words into something new—geo-ontology, geopedagogy, splace (space + place), dialectical materialism.

At first I thought it was a game, a game of words and meaning. He explains New Orleans, the Crescent City, arcs from two circles intersecting at two points. He is so skilled, persistent, that it becomes not quite comic, and a lightness of being lifts his prose like the music of the spheres. He is divvying out these words like the counters to a kind of board game which as you come to understand and begin to play, it dawns on you that you are now roped into something deep and real.

Death and destruction holds no fear. He philosophically riffs on interstice finding “interstitial” and “antistitial.” You might be playing tennis, or listening to cosmic vibrations. In the section titled “The Social Ontology of Yat,” he pulls our legs using the traditional New Orleans working-class dialect

known as “Yat” and its famous greeting, “Where y’at?” In this last essay, his joy in his city, in its apocalypse, in its interstices and betweenness, dancing on the edge of the abyss. The abyss looks back at him and winks.

To watch him play with the word “crescent” is like beholding a great acrobat or tumbler, and this tragically in the midst of disaster. You are by turns quiet in concentration or jumping

up dancing. You hardly know whether to fall reverently silent, shout in jubilation, or scream in righteous prophetic wrath.

A master is showing us the way.

Peter Linebaugh writes about British, Irish, labor history, and of the colonial Atlantic. His latest book is *Red Round Globe Hot Burning* reviewed elsewhere in this section.

Godless: 150 Years of Disbelief

Editor: Chaz Bufe; Introduction: Don Arel

PM Press, 2019 pmpress.org

PETER WERBE

More than a thousand years ago, a Chinese Zen master wrote: *Magical power, Marvelous action! Chopping wood, Carrying water.*

The eleven essays assembled here by See Sharp Press publisher Chaz Bufe are effective diatribes against belief in gods that completely destroy every aspect



and argument on which Christianity and other religions are based.

Although some of the texts are of recent vintage, all are rooted in the traditional notion on the left and among anarchists that religion is the “opiate of the masses,” as has been famously said, and, hence, the distinct enemy of revolution.

In the opening essay, “The God Pestilence,” late 19th century American anarchist Johann Most nails religion as “a reign of terror,” a bloody sword that has brought death and destruction, torture and pillage to the faithful for thousands of years. Plus, the fog of religion, he insists, makes the believer incapable of independent thought. He acidly writes of the believer, “. . . once in the clutches of the priests, his intellect becomes barren—his intellectual functions cease to operate in a normal way, and instead religious maggots and divine worms wriggle through his brain.” Whew!

What doesn’t get addressed in any of the essays is why there is something in the religious spirit among the most devout that gives rise to such murderous impulses as we’ve seen in history and in contemporary slaughters among those with a slightly different take on a belief.

The faithful often answer this question with the “humans are flawed” argument, so that the blatant hypocrisy and violence associated with the most devout, it is claimed, doesn’t invalidate the fundamental beliefs or institutions operating in the name of various gods. But this needs closer attention.

Almost all cultures across the globe, beginning at least in the Neolithic era 12,000 years ago, devised spiritual explanations for the fundamental questions of human existence. This occurrence was so universal that geneticist Dean Hamer recently suggested the physical presence of a so-called god gene within our human genetic composition.

Joseph Campbell, a 20th century academic who studied comparative mythology, similarly noted what he called a monomyth, one basic myth about existence expressed in a multitude of spiritualities world-wide that are but variations on a single great story.

And, perhaps one or both of these explanations for universal spiritual expression is correct. However, this in no way validates any or all religious beliefs. A better explanation can

“The Virgin Spanking the Christ Child before Three Witnesses: Andre Breton, Paul Eluard, and the Painter” Max Ernst: 1926

be found in the basic theory of evolution. Maybe within the social structures of early human bands there was a need for a mythical explanation of life's purpose and processes, an overarching narrative as adaptation for group cohesion and hence, survival.

The mytho-poetic spirituality that marked most pre-state social formations was a necessary component of their existence and can be illustrated by a circle within which all in a society held hands—the people, the flora, fauna, and the earth itself. All with an interconnected importance and purpose.

With the end of the Neolithic period 3,500 years ago and the rise of the state, this spiritual impulse is directed away from a circularity and replaced by a social pyramid where male sky gods replicate the newly formed hierarchal and pa-

triarchal political structures and whose function is to sanctify the ruling order.

The intense hostility of revolutionaries to religion in the last 150 years chronicled in *Godless* is understandable since religion remained a central bulwark of the state in the modern era just as it was at its origin.

Christianity, for instance, never had a Golden Age before turning into a state-approved racket sanctifying the authority of the Roman emperor and subsequent ruling orders. Religion's role has lessened in recent years, but the most faithful still are the base of authoritarian political movement and states.

Spirituality, taking thousands of forms world-wide, are human-devised stories that obviously can't all be simultaneously



"The Destruction of the Fifth Sun" Lowell Boileau 1981

Religion: Aztec Style

LOWELL BOILEAU

The Destruction of the Fifth Sun" is an allegory of justice based on the apocalyptic Aztec vision of the same name whereby the world and humanity ends in a cataclysm.

The central Mexican empire, dominant from 1300 to 1521, believed the doom could be delayed by daily ritualist human sacrifices in which the victims' hearts were hacked from their chests by priests and the still pounding organs held aloft to the sun thereby appeasing the gods.

A large-scale war economy evolved to satiate the voracious demands of security and continual wars and colonial conquests were fought to secure victims. Sound familiar?

In this modernized version, the day of destruction has

arrived just as a victim is being led up the temple steps for sacrifice by priests, now in military garb. Avenging gods, led by the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, the god of wind, air, and learning, with his cohorts, descend from the upper right. In the background, the two-serpent-headed god, Coatlicue, wears her traditional necklace of hands and hearts, but with a new girdle of hand grenades and mace cans.

On the crumbling steps, the reclining Chacmool gods, into whose vessels the sacrificial hearts have been placed, are revealed to be accepting gifts of contemporary materialism—cars, boats, planes, money—along with hearts.

Amid the chaos, the only one smiling is the bound victim as he watches, beaming with delight, the corrupt world collapse around him.

The mythology surrounding the Destruction of the Fifth Sun led to the downfall of the Aztecs. The Spanish conquistadors arrived in Mexico in 1519, by chance, at an astrologically significant time with traits that fulfilled many Aztec prophecies. The ensuing confusion caused Aztecs to welcome the Spaniards into their capital city whereupon the Spaniards imprisoned the emperor, Moctezuma II, and claimed the land for the Spanish crown.

Sadly, the destruction of the Aztecs did not lead to justice. Instead, an epidemic of imported diseases destroyed a third of the three million inhabitants, followed by three centuries of cruel colonial oppression.

Detroit artist Lowell Boileau is a painter, internet media artist, and writer. He and Stephen Goodfellow co-created Micropointillist painting technique. His paintings and internet media art are at LowellBoileau.com.

true regardless of Joseph Campbell's theories of a single narrative expressed differently. In other words, spiritual beliefs are stories creatively rendered to meet the needs of a particular culture at a given time.

Some are worse than others. The Judeo-Christian story of a fall from grace and redemption through sacrifice is not particularly unique as several other Middle Eastern myths express this pattern, but the idea that we are born with sin as an inherent definition is a particularly pernicious and odious idea.

However, if we do have a god gene in us, and since churches by the thousands are thankfully closing across North America and Europe, maybe we need to make up one with better symbolism than a man being tortured because of our inherent corruption. Men (gender specific intended) invented the narrative fiction of the sky god religions to justify class rule and the suppression of women.

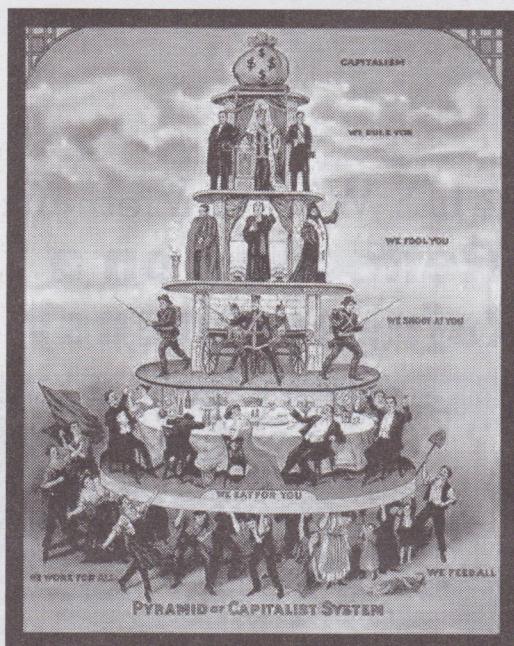
We can do better than that!

Let's devise a spiritual belief that honors the sacrifice of the exploding star that scattered its atoms across the universe until they congealed in this solar system and created the planets and provided the building material for all its creatures including us. We can come together regularly to sing songs and have ceremonies in abandoned sky god houses of worship (no more worshiping!) about how everything is part of everything else and all deserve honor and protection. We can have lots of days off to recognize the sun (forget about the Son) and the moon and all the planets, and ourselves and all the creatures and the rocks, rivers, and plants. No priests.

Or, if that's all too complicated or inconvenient, how about just everyone adhering to the Golden Rule?

I suspect most readers of this publication don't need convincing of the absurdity of religious belief systems, that they are a bulwark of political power, and lead to disunity rather than how they functioned 10,000 years ago within small band societies.

But, try this book out on your religious friends and family members. Maybe ask them to skip Most's vituperative essay where he calls religious people "brain defilers." However, it would be difficult for any of them to refute Sébastien Faure's essay, "Twelve Proofs of the Nonexistence of God," (proving non-existence is tough!) or editor Chaz Bufe's "Twenty Reasons to Abandon Christianity." Early feminist Matilda Gage's 1893 "Woman, Church and State" makes clear the relationship of the latter to the suppression of the former.



"Pyramid of the Capitalist System" published in the 1911 edition of *The Industrial Worker*. IWW.org.

Humor makes an appearance in Earl Lee's send up of *Dogspell*, a book urging Christians to have the same devotion to God as their pets do to them. Lee asks, does that mean being "on all fours, sniffing the crotch of God."

And, the epigram at the beginning? Chop wood, carry water, and the meaning of life becomes clear. It's what we do and what we choose every minute of the day that defines who we are and life's purpose.

No gods; no masters.

Peter Werbe is a member of the Fifth Estate editorial collective.

Good Without God Raising Religion-Free Kids

Parenting Without God: How to Raise Moral, Ethical, and Intelligent Children, Free from Religious Dogma
Second edition

Dan Arel; forward: Jessica Mills
PM Press 2019

Although this may be beating a dead horse (that would be gods), there remains the pro-religionist argument that without God, anything is permissible. However, since under the sign of God, all horrors imaginable have occurred, it makes sense to look for a secular grounding for our ethics.

Anarchism can easily be interpreted as the ethical manifestation of the Golden Rule, but how is it applied, particularly in raising our kids?

What do we tell our children about the meaning of life and death, heaven and hell? Should we allow our kids to go to church when friends invite them? What advice do we give them when the Pledge of Allegiance is recited or prayers offered at a public gathering? Will professing atheism get them ostracized?

Dan Arel in this fairly short text tackles the big questions of existence and smaller ones of daily life in a sensible, easy to understand manner.

—PW

**Among the Boat People:
A Memoir of Vietnam**
Nhi Manh Chung
Autonomedia 2019
autonomedia.org

**WENDY
WILDFLOWER**

"When wars are over, people only want to know who won, what exciting battles took place, and all that military idiocy. People never know what the innocent victims have to say."

— poet and artist
Yuko Otomo

The U.S. War On Vietnam: Reflection on a Refugee Journey



The era of the 1960s and early 1970s was an inspiring time for many radicals in the U.S. as elsewhere. Militarism and racism, along with other forms of hierarchy, were being massively opposed by the civil rights, anti-war (including G.I. resistance), feminist and student movements, opening up possibilities for a larger social transformation.

While radical optimism prevailed in this country, the U.S. war waged against Vietnam resulted in the death of millions of Indochinese, the devastation of the land, and an intensified brutalization of social life.

In the first two decades after the 1975 U.S. military withdrawal, millions of people fled Vietnam in the face of Communist government repression combined with extreme economic difficulties. Very many were eventually given refuge in the U.S., Canada, France and other countries.

The author was among the thousands who boarded decrepit and overloaded boats to escape. The approximately 800,000 who survived these dangerous voyages, along with thousands who did not, became known as the boat people.

This book tells Nhi Chung's story

along with the stories of other refugees whose lives touched hers.

She describes a diversity of people she has met, some like herself from the Chinese minority, some from the countryside, some from the city, some the children of Vietnamese women and U.S. soldiers, some from formerly well off families such as her own, and others quite poor.

Chung relates several abortive escapes, followed by a harrowing voyage she and others undertook through stormy seas in rickety, overcrowded boats, rotten food and rancid water, robbery and rapes by pirates, boat sinkings and drownings, and being turned away from several countries.

Finally, the group of refugees came upon an American oil drilling platform where the workers helped them to contact the Red Cross, find temporary refuge in Malaysia, and begin the process of applying for asylum in countries that might accept them.

She arrived in the U.S. in 1979. Her narrative then covers many of the challenges she and other refugees faced, including learning to navigate a new culture and build new lives, as well as

some wonderful examples of social solidarity and love by new friends, neighbors, coworkers and even a few strangers.

Chung's multifaceted, complex descriptions of the shaping of her own life and those of the other refugees and immigrants she has known from a variety of backgrounds challenge stereotypes. Her narrative addresses themes that are still relevant today.

They include the different reasons people migrate, differences in economic and social circumstances of people before and after, and the

different ways they may be viewed in U.S. society based on physical characteristics, such as skin color.

This specificity can contribute to greater understanding of the situations of those currently coming here in ways that inspire respect, empathy and concrete solidarity.

Although the book does not focus directly on political ideas, it makes clear that the personal experiences of refugees are strongly shaped by the authoritarian politics of domination both in the countries they are fleeing and the places they resettle.

Today, the world is in desperate need of new ideas beyond the narrow possibilities of the nation-state system. The stories in *Among the Boat People* can contribute to the understanding necessary for abolishing borders and breaking down hierarchies to create a more cooperative and compassionate world, centered in mutual aid, self-management, voluntary association, horizontality, decentralization and solidarity.

Wendy Wildflower is a longtime friend of the Fifth Estate.

Let Us Now Praise Idle Men (and Women)

SUZANNE FREEMAN

It's time to celebrate
the late-sleepers
and merry drinkers,
the loafers & slackers & slow-pokes.
The ones on permanent vacation,
unhurried and unworried,
the rose-smellers & growing-grass watchers, what harm
did they ever do?
How about a cheer
for siesta snoozers
and lazy losers,
the long joke-tellers
and deep toke-takers,
life is too short
for conformity.
Let's give a prize
to the underachievers, the shiftless shirkers,
the less-than-full-potential workers,
the laid-back quitters,
the mushroom-sitters & hookah-huffers,
they never started a war
nor enslaved anyone.
We could give a parade
for the noon-time nappers & ne'er-do-wells,
but they'd sleep right through it
so let's leave them alone.
They are slumbering
toward a higher calling,
they are poets of their own lives
seining the sea of their dreams
for the meaning of bliss.

Suzanne Freeman lives in the Texas Hill Country where she writes and practices internet avoidance to preserve her humanity. Her poetry has appeared in publications ranging from *Social Anarchism* to *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Her award winning dystopian novella, *Omnibo*, is available from Texas Review Press.



A May 1968 Paris march when everything seemed possible.

Paris May-June 1968 The Joy of Revolution

**Freedom in Solidarity: My Experiences
in the May 1968 Uprising**

Kadour Naimi

Translation and foreword by David Porter

AK Press, 2019 akpress.org

S.K.

During times of social ferment like the present, there tends to be a reawakening of interest in past insurgencies, such as those of the May-June 1968 French uprising. So David Porter's English translation of Kadour Naimi's memoir of those transformative events is particularly timely.

While there have been several other highly relevant texts in English, this book is an especially welcome contribution because it is written by a person from a somewhat different background than that of most of the other writers on the topic.

The author, Kadour Naimi, is currently an internationally known playwright, screenwriter, and filmmaker. But, during those tumultuous days in France, he was an economically strapped young college student who had immigrated to France a few years earlier from a newly independent Algeria.

Naimi grew up in a working class family. As a teenager he was actively involved in some very dangerous demonstrations against the French colonial government. He also participated in local community self-defense against the right-wing French settlers intent on terrorizing North Africans.

In 1962, when Algeria gained independence, European owners and managers fled the country, workers initiated self-management involving hundreds of thousands on farms,

in factories, workshops and other enterprises throughout the country. Naimi witnessed this firsthand. He was inspired by the workers' creativity and challenges to the established hierarchies when he brought lunch to his father at a shoe factory.

Naimi's desire to become a playwright led him to immigrate to France in 1966 at the age of 21 and enroll in the Ecole Supérieure d'Art Dramatique (the School of Drama) in Strasbourg, 300 miles east of Paris. To his delight Strasbourg turned out to be one of the hotbeds of student radicalism.

When the 1968 upheaval broke out, he welcomed it enthusiastically, sensing self-management principles in much of the student movement and hope in the workers' general strike and occupations. He was a participant in radical activities centered at Strasbourg University.

At that time, Naimi knew nothing much about anarchist ideas beyond authoritarian Marxist falsifications of them. He appreciated Marx's early writings concerning social and intellectual liberation, and his writing on the Paris Commune. But Naimi was also taken in by some of the Maoist claims about the benevolence of elite supervision of popular insurgency. Although he didn't think of himself as an anarchist, he nevertheless had strong anti-authoritarian beliefs, and rejected Leninist ideas that put emphasis on leaders presiding over a party that needed to take power to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat.

Naimi's account makes connections between the personal and political in the French movement. He explores the conflict between his sexual desires and the revolutionary abstinence he learned from studying Maoist ideas.

Having learned from his mother to respect women's intellectual capacities, he was concerned about the low numbers of women involved in discussions during the general assemblies at the occupied universities. But, he tells us, he had no real ideas for remedying this situation.

His experiences in his native Algeria led Naimi to search for ways to challenge hierarchies and authoritarian rules, including those inherent in nationalism and capitalism wherever they appeared. He rejected compromise with Algeria's post-independence military dictatorship, while also rejecting the charade of capitalist democracy.

In July 1968, following the defeat of the revolutionary upsurge, Naimi returned to his home town in Algeria where he helped develop a self-managed theatrical company, the Theatre of the Sea: Company of Research and Experimental Theatrical Productions. The audience was primarily workers of town and countryside, as well as high school and university students, and some intellectuals. Audience participation was strongly encouraged.

But after three years, the troupe was shut down by the military in consultation with authoritarian socialists who

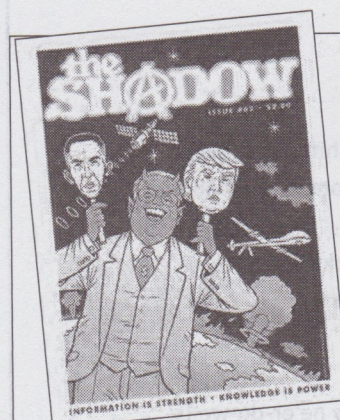
rejected the libertarian tendencies it represented and encouraged.

At the end of 1973, Naimi returned to Europe and began exploring the anarchist tradition, including both 19th and 20th century individuals and groups as a way of better understanding the failures of socialist revolutions. In the 1980s he resumed his creative activities in theater and film, addressing the concerns of working people and socially aware intellectuals. He moved to Italy, where he founded the Maldoror Film company, as well as a Film School and the Festival Internazionale Cinema Libero (International Free Film Festival).

Kadour Naimi's memoir is particularly relevant because of his inherently anarchistic perspectives along with his introspective self-critical, creative, and observational skills, giving him the ability to add to previous reports on the 1968 French events in significant ways.

The late David Porter's translation and introduction make this valuable narrative available to English readers.

S.K. has been interested in anarchist and anti-authoritarian participation in social insurgencies for many years.



Who Knows What Evil Lurks in the Hearts of Men?

NYC's The Sh@dow
Certainly Does

The Sh@dow, that describes itself as "New

York's ONLY underground

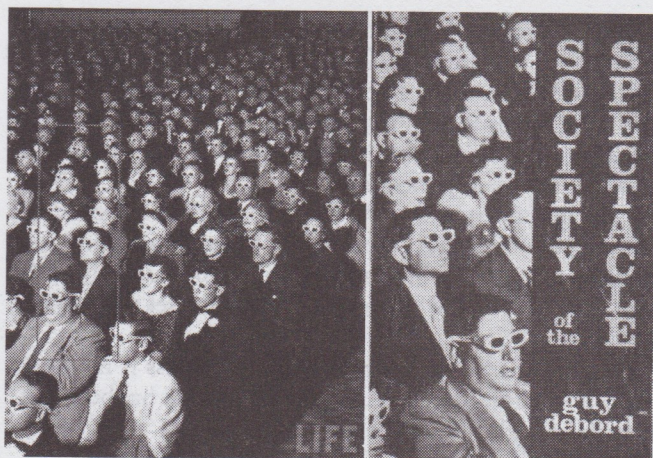
newspaper," is back after a bit of pause in publishing.

Launched in 1989 by Chris Flash and a band of Lower Eastsiders to combat the lies of the corporate press about squatted buildings and community gardens, the new issue continues sticking a thumb in the eye of powerful politicians and institutions.

It's a truly community paper that addresses concerns of local residents such as support for a local radio station, warning about lack of preparation for hurricane storm surges, defense of community gardens, and a general calling out of political corruption.

A center-spread cartoon by Seth Tobocman, wacky 9/11 conspiracies, computer security & more.

10 issues-\$20. @shadowpress to contact.



A history of a little Detroit printing co-op that gave us “Society of the Spectacle” & a lot more

The Politics of the Joy of Printing: The Detroit Printing Co-op
Danielle Aubert
Artbook/D.A.P.

PETER WERBE

The text of this history of the Detroit Printing Co-op is engaging enough by itself even without its colorful, graphic filled pages of the work produced in the decade beginning in 1970 at an all-volunteer project amidst the city’s industrial ruins.

It’s a lively account of how people with no background in printing, assembled the machinery, secured a building, taught themselves the necessary skills, and self-organized a crew of co-operators and co-conspirators to publish books, magazines, leaflets, and posters with themes and ideas that were rocking the country’s culture and politics.

With equipment already decades old, the co-op was committed to not just publishing radical ideas, but functioning as a prefiguring of the society its members desired by defining itself as social property without bosses or wage work. Echoing this perspective, the IWW union bug on many of the publications left no doubt as to the origins of the politics of its most active founders, Fredy and Lorraine Perlman, as well as others who participated. Along with its union designation, the bug boldly advocated, “Abolish the Wage System; Abolish the State; All Power to the Workers.”

Desire to publish texts free from commercial considerations or control animated the project and serves as an in-

The iconic photo that appears on the 1977 second edition of Black & Red’s translation of Guy Debord’s Situationist text, *Society of the Spectacle*, originally was a 1952 LIFE magazine cover. It was taken at the premiere screening of the first full-length 3-D film, *Bwana Devil*.

The section appropriated for the Debord cover is marked.

spiring story of a model for autonomous, unmediated activity that sought to do away with the division of labor with its skilled and unskilled labor, bosses and employees.

A flurry of books, printed under the shop’s publishing imprint, Black and Red, erupted from the project borne of enthusiasm including several suppressed histories of the Russian Revolution such as Voline’s *Unknown Revolution*, *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918–1921* by Peter Arshinov, and Maurice Brinton’s *Bolsheviks and Workers Control*. Books that powerfully combat the Leninist myths peddled by communist apologists for the Bolshevik suppression of the authentic revolution.

Titles such as Jacques Camatte’s *The Wandering of Humanity*, *Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord, G. Munis’s *Unions Against Revolution*, and other ultra-left authors were translated and printed. Reading Black & Red books had a marked impact on the staff of the Fifth Estate at that time.

Acquaintance with the new radical ideas contained in those texts invigorated the staff to continue publishing, saving it from disappearing as had the 500 other so-called underground papers of that era. Other radicals and anarchists speak in the same manner about the influence Black and Red books had on their thinking and activity.

Books such as *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* by Jose Peirats renewed interest in that event and others where people challenged authorities and rejected leaders. Fredy Perlman’s own writings such as *Against His-Story; Against Leviathan*, and his many pamphlets rolled off the shop’s huge press. Perlman wrote *Letters of Insurgents* in 1976, and at 831 pages pushed the shop’s technical capacity to its limit.

Many of the books were typeset at the Fifth Estate office, and the ideas in them continue to resonate in these pages.

Today, when someone self-publishes a book, it means they pay a vanity press to do the labor involved in transforming a manuscript from a disc into a finished book.

At the Detroit Printing Co-op, self-publishing meant that everyone involved in the effort worked collectively from author to those who did the typesetting, created imaginative graphics, did the printing trades work of that era including process camera photographing, plate making, the actual printing, folding signatures, binding, trimming, and wrapping the cover on the book.

If these tasks aren’t familiar, it’s because they are processes

of a long gone era.

Books and pamphlets focusing on history and theory were matched by material printed by activists used in their organizing. Streaming through the print shop's doors to do a decade of innovative publishing were anarchists, black radicals, high school students, poets, labor and anti-war campaigners, all anxious to redefine the reality of the world. On several occasions, leftists or budding entrepreneurs attempted to alter the character of the shop into something more conventional. They were quickly rebuffed.

The most famous book published by the Co-op was the first English translation of the Situationist International's *Society of the Spectacle*, which Black & Red continues to publish today. Much of the operating expenses for the project were paid for many years by printing *Radical America*, a Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) periodical.

Author Danielle Aubert, who teaches graphic design at Detroit's Wayne State University, brings the exciting history chronicled here to a higher level by including reproductions from nearly every publication that came off of the co-op's presses between 1970 and 1980. It is at once a radical history and an art book, so luscious are the graphics on almost every page.

All the Psy-Ops that Fit the Screen

Infomodities

JASON RODGERS

"News is the dialogue of fragmented power with itself. Notice how scientists, politicians or businessmen now complain that even they only learn about the events they manage from the news"

"Some Fragmented Views from a Fragmented World"
Against Sleep and Nightmares

Information bombardment from multiple media sources makes contemplation difficult. Everything is broken down into fragmented data having no relation to anything else presenting. It is superficially processed constantly. No rest, but neither exertion nor effort. Just continuous banality and superficiality.

Experts and management derive their power from specialization, from dividing experience into component parts and monopolizing key nexus points. At the same time, this power is their weakness. The capability to engage in a wide range of living facets is cut off, instead they rely on their oppressed underlings. Their view is cut off to such an extent that a per-

Print on paper, a medium that recently celebrated its 500th anniversary, is a product of the Age of Gutenberg. It is slow and deliberate, difficult to produce, and expensive to publish, but it was done at the Printing Co-op with a sense of pride for learning skills that could bring people ideas that weren't available almost anywhere else.

The machinery and work it took to produce a book at the Printing Co-op would probably now be exhibited along with horseshoeing, having been superseded by the ease of publishing online among the billion and a half web sites that exist on the internet.

Efficiency triumphs as the collective process is no longer needed. What is gained at the expense of what has been lost? Certainly, the joy of printing.

The Politics of the Joy of Printing: The Detroit Printing Co-op is available from artbook.com.

Black and Red titles are at BlackandRed.org. Some of them are available as special offers with Fifth Estate subscriptions and renewals at FifthEstate.org.

Peter Werbe is a member of the Fifth Estate editorial collective.



petual bombardment of information is the only way they can maintain the illusion of awareness.

The more ever-present and expansive the system of power is, the more spread out and thin it is. Paradoxically, as the totality forms, each nexus becomes more isolated and fragmented. A continuous communication system becomes the nervous system of totalitarianism.

With info-power it becomes not a matter of understanding or a whole picture view, but the ability to manipulate pieces of discrete data, factoids, with no relationship to anything else. Data pours forth in a continuous stream, which immediately flows away, becoming irrelevant.

News is the recombinant mechanism of disjointed imagery, recontextualizing the stream of internet and satellite images, giving the illusion that semiocapitalism, where political economy has leaked into all forms of existence, is under control on a human level, when actually it is beyond the control of individuals. This is the flipside of cyberculture theory, which holds electronic systems up as dynamical, as a new nature, thus out of human control.

Fragmented journalism in the digital age results in news as

an even more fragmented discourse where each piece of data is disconnected from any whole knowledge. Consuming news is habitual, a ritual habit in which one feels they are informed. This is all fleeting data washing over the consumer.

Each news alert ding draws the attention of smartphone users as if they were Pavlov's poor, tortured, salivating puppies.

Jason Rodgers can be reached at Campaign to Play For Keeps, PO Box 10894, Albany, NY 12201.

On Cinema

Glauber Rocha
Ismail Xavier, editor
I.B. Tauris, 2019

MURIEL LUCAS

The fiftieth anniversary of the global upheavals of 1968 has provoked a spate of books examining political cinema and its relationship to the era.

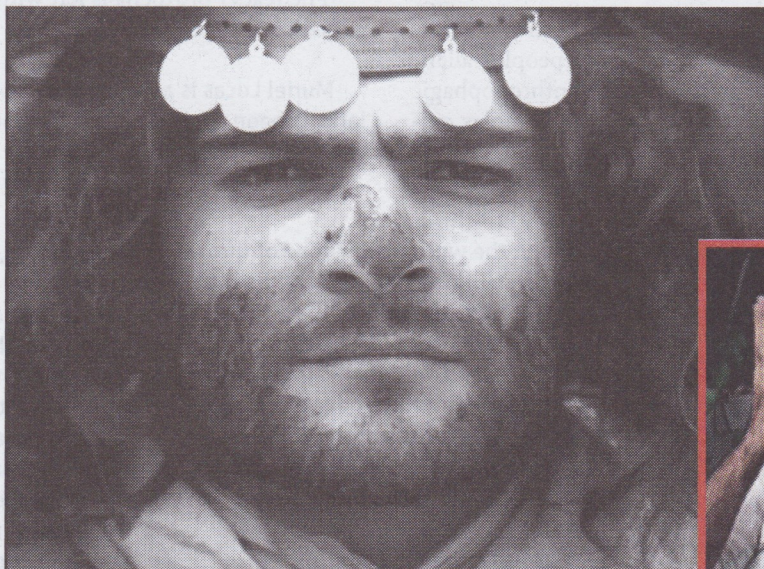
It's an almost frenzied demand to re-examine the camera as a weapon of rhetoric, and to grapple with cinema's apparent decline as a radical medium over the decades.

Ismail Xavier, editor of *On Cinema*, acknowledges as much in the introduction. He is elated that the long and arduous product of producing the first collection of Glauber Rocha's writings translated into English should coincide with the anniversary.

Rocha (1939-1981), a film director, actor and screenwriter, is regarded as the leader of Brazil's *Cinema Novo* movement, the country's most prominent theorist, and one of the towering figures of the tricontinental Third Cinema.

Rocha's films, such as "Black God, White Devil" (1964), are disorientating, violent, and deliberately imperfect works of frustrated poetry. They were accompanied by manifestos such as "An Aesthetics of Hunger" (1965) and "An Aesthetic of Dreams" (1971), which proved as influential as the films.

These two legendary works are included in this collection, along with a comprehensive survey of Rocha's other musings on politics and film. He is revealed as an incisive and querulous critic of his peers and industry.



Lidio Silva in Glauber Rocha's "Black God; White Devil." (left)

Glauber Rocha, below, (1939-1981), influential Brazilian film director, actor, and screenwriter.



The work of Glauber Rocha Film as Social Critique

Rocha's faults as a thinker do not shed new light on the traditional picture of the New Left. As an aesthetist, he worships the "man of action" over the collective voice. As a revolutionary, he prefers the "new man" vanguardist embodied by his hero, Che Guevara, rather than democratic action. He is a male chauvinist and prone to grandiosity and bitter polemics.

In spite of this, there are innumerable flashes of liberating insight, exciting ruptures and contradictions, much like a Rocha film. His most powerful critiques are aimed at the film industry.

In "The Cinematographic Revolution" (1967), he savages the distribution process as the "pernicious point" of filmmaking in the capitalist world, particularly problematic for global markets that rely on "American money" to deliver their films and front financing costs with loans.

He urges filmmakers to become their own producers and distributors. He connects film's commercialization accurately to State censorship: "The State exercises on the product vig-

orous action... the predefined set of ideological guidelines," he writes.

Moreover, he sees the global reach of Hollywood as a pervasive propaganda machine that wedges filmmakers in the majority world between insidious imitation and the paternalism of the European arthouse.

The ambitious goal of these writings becomes clear: create a new cinema, built upon the foundations of scarcity, the creation of "sad, ugly... screaming films" made by the incomprehensible violence of hunger, and in turn provoking violence.

Hunger is a consistent theme, from films born from starvation and Hollywood films that "devour people's alienations," to his writing on Tropicalism and anthropophagic cinema, a cannibal cinema that ingests Brazil's complex culture.

The writings are presented chronologically. It's a compel-

ling portrait of a filmmaker's unresolved contradictions, ideological dead-ends, and polemical exhaustion.

"The historical role of surrealism in the oppressed Hispano-American world was to be an instrument of thought in the path toward anarchic liberation, the only liberation possible," written in the dizzying buildup to his exile from Brazil in 1971 during the military dictatorship.

What if Rocha had embraced that anarchic surrealism, the trajectory seen in his best work, instead of insisting on the didactic-epic of his rigid Marxist-Leninist politics?

The reader of Rocha is left with the same questions as the audience of his bewildering films.

Muriel Lucas is an anarchist and cinephile living in Portland, Oregon, and curator of the Church of Film. churchoffilm.org.



Letters

Continued from Page 2

where, most importantly, our archive of back articles appear, and where people in various parts of the world who do not have access to the print version can read the FE, but always our major focus will be on our print edition.

The letter was handwritten.

CELL PHONES FOR CUBA?

With Cuba now offering 3G mobile Internet service to their citizens, this creates an opportunity. In the U.S., the major mobile companies are either planning to turn off their 3G networks or else have already turned them off in favor of 4G service.

This means that older smart phones such as iPhone 4s, as well as early Androids, will no longer work in the U.S.

Put out the word that instead of throwing these phones out, donate them to the Fifth Estate, and you'll get them into the hands of Cuban citizens.

The more that Cuban citizens are able to interact with the Internet the way we can, the faster the revolution against the current regime and change in general will come.

Walt Thiessen

FE Reply: Forgetting about the logistics involved in doing this, wouldn't this amount to leaving one tyranny for another? And, acceleration of the revolution? Is it cynical to think that the major use of Cubans with cell phones will be little different than it is here, i.e., Snapchat, Twitter, and Facebook?

Somehow, the great social movements of the past, such as the labor and civil rights movements, were able to take on mass proportions without cell phones or the internet. They're often handy for keeping in communication during actions, but aren't a necessary component of rebellion.

IDEOLOGICAL JOURNEY

I would like to write to you about the immense influence that FE has had on my ideological journey. The radicalism and artistic thought in the publication has been unmatched since

its inception, so I'm happy to see that it has survived this long.

I am a student in New York who has gone down the path of radical decentralization and free expression, my generation thirsts for an alternative to the full spectacle of everyday life.

I wish that this line of thinking was more prevalent, it could've saved countless in my age bracket from descending into the likes of the Alt-Right.

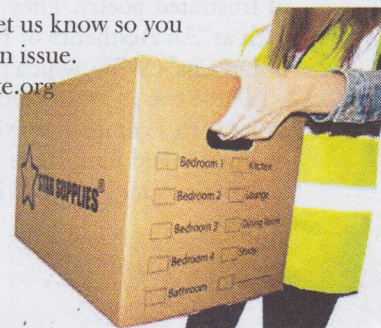
JK
New York City

Correction: In our article "Evoking Spirit: The Anarchist Art of Robert Henri," Summer 2019, Henri's sister-in-law, Violet Organ, was misidentified under a graphic as the artist's wife. Marjorie Organ was Henri's wife.

Violet became the heir to his paintings following the deaths of the artist and his wife. It was she who destroyed the Emma Goldman portraits.

MOVING?

Be sure to let us know so you don't miss an issue.
fe@fifthestate.org



Hong Kong



But, is there still a vision of revolution?

Rebellions Rock the World

PAUL WALKER

In the latter half of 2019, the streets of Hong Kong, Santiago, Barcelona, Baghdad, London, Paris, and Beirut were flooded with huge demonstrations demanding reforms or the removal of politicians.

All displayed the outward exuberance of mass revolutionary upsurges, but generally raised only demands for fair governance rather than revolutionary alterations of the countries in which they are occurring.

However, isn't every rebellion inchoate revolution when people burst through permissible boundaries? Doesn't the burning anger at those in power, even if the demands are only for less corrupt rulers, bring with it a joy and solidarity missing in daily life? Revolution is rarely a first resort.

However, there is the pessimistic possibility that the 200 year history of the defeat of radical movements against capitalism and the state has scrubbed from the popular imagination and vision the idea of a complete transformation of society. The triumph of capital following the Age of Revolution that lasted from 1848, after the early resistance to class society and industrialism, to the 1939 defeat of the Spanish Revolution, may have so secured the rule of capital that it now seems unassailable and the best that can be hoped for is a less punitive and more equitable administration of the system. Or, at least that's what the rulers hope is the case.

None of the movements confronting their governments are products of decades of revolutionary organizing with a vision of a new society, but rather are spontaneous objections to a range of grievances. Will they reinvent forms of community

and struggle different than the ones that have failed in past heroic attempts to overthrow the prevailing system, or will they be satisfied with cheaper gasoline and a new face in the president or prime minister's chair??

One suspects this will be answered by the time you read this or soon after.

One curious facet is the reaction to the uprisings by the American corporate media which have become almost uncritical cheerleaders for direct action.

Until recently, you could count on the corporate media to slander all autonomous protest movements that took to the streets by misrepresenting their demands, vastly undercounting the number of participants, and lecturing activists that the proper venue for grievances is at the ballot box.

For instance, in the October 20 *New York Times*, David Leonhardt titled his column, "Want Trump to Go? Take to the Streets," writing, "Another moment for public protest has arrived." It strains memory to recall when *The Times* ever before advocated direct action.

This change in reporting style has its roots in the massive 2017 Women's March on Washington the day after the inauguration of Donald Trump as U.S. president. It was the largest single day protest in history with millions participating in 672 cities across the world denouncing the election of a right wing opponent of all the liberal reforms of the past 85 years.

The U.S. marches were covered uncritically by most major media, filling hours of broadcast time. Speakers advocated a wide range of human rights and environmental concerns. It was as if progressive activists had taken over the national TV

and cable networks as well as the country's largest print publications.

In 2019, the media seemed similarly enamored with demonstrations erupting in cities across the globe. Usually, media outlets focus on small acts of violence within mass actions to discredit an entire event. But, particularly in Hong Kong, reporters and editorialists mostly support the months-long campaign against the government. When not simply ignoring violence, they were quick to explain it away as a result of frustration felt by demonstrators due to the intransigence of ruling politicians.

Just as startling is the sympathetic coverage of the tragedy that unfolded in October when the Turkish invasion of Syria crushed the Kurdish independent, self-governing enclaves in the Rojava border region. The destruction of communities inspired in large part by anarchist Murray Bookchin's concept of Municipalism, featuring an ethos of women's liberation, religious tolerance, and self-determination, is a social and political catastrophe.

For the media, even a hint of radicalism on the part of protesters is usually enough to elicit a rabid denunciation of an action or stigmatizing a campaign. But in this case, the Kurds were portrayed mostly as U.S. allies who defeated ISIS alongside American forces. When the new set of social relations present in Rojava was mentioned, it was usually referred to as "an experiment," and described sympathetically.

A *New York Times* dispatch, while reporting glowingly about what had been accomplished in Rojava, referred to Bookchin as "a Vermont-based philosopher," apparently to avoid invoking the dreaded "A" word.

Even Republican politicians were critical of Trump's green-lighting the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the region in October, a move which forced 300,000 Kurdish residents to flee and allowed invading Turkish troops to begin a massive ethnic cleansing campaign and counter-revolution.

Rojava offered a model for social revolution, much like that of the Zapatista Rebellion a quarter century ago, providing a hopeful vision of altered social relationships forged within a civil war and Kurdish combat against ISIS.

The story of the Rojava Revolution has a parallel to 1930s Spain: just as North American anarchists traveled to Spain to help defend the Revolution, several went to the Middle East to fight with the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) which suffered 10,000 casualties in battles against the reactionary Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.

It's not clear what options the Kurds have. Their history is one of oppression in the countries where they live and betrayal by big power nations. In their new dependence upon Putin and the Syrian dictator Assad, is undoubtedly one in which the Kurds can hear the knives being sharpened for their eventual slaughter.

In the U.S., where large demonstrations are mostly tolerated, people who want Trump removed from office haven't

Beirut, Nov. 2019. Protesters in Joker make-up appear around the world. In Hong Kong, where masks were outlawed, Guy Fawkes disguises appeared.



responded in great numbers to the *Times* columnist's call for street action. The question remains, though, why a sudden support for non-parliamentary actions from media sources that previously ignored or scorned them?

It may be that the liberal wing of the ruling class realizes that Trump at home, other right-wing governments around the world, and an uptick in fascist organizing are a hindrance to a smoothly operating capitalist system. It's not as though the rulers sat around a table and decided to give their media permission to encourage demonstrations, but something they realize reflexively, memory having reminded them that a fascist response to crises doesn't work out well for them.

The American codification of "the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances," in the U.S. Constitution is somewhat surprising since many of the Founding Slavers had a profound distrust of those in the classes below them. Alexander Hamilton feared the people and loathed mobs. He is quoted as calling them "the great beast," one that couldn't be trusted with governance.

In Hong Kong, it is a desire for a safeguard against being swallowed by the authoritarian Chinese party-state. In Barcelona, it is outrage at the imprisonment of Catalan nationalist leaders. In Santiago, Beirut, Paris, and Baghdad, the anger arises from economic issues. None of the demands exceed what can be granted within the system that spawned the anger. Public space is occupied only for the time of demonstrations although there have been successes in prices being lowered and politicians have resigned.

In London, environmental demonstrations are smaller than those in the other cities, but the disruptive tactics of Extinction Rebellion, speaking for the fears of a young generation concerned about what future is in store for them, has closed sections of the city employing innovative tactics.

They realize, at this point, without an immediate worldwide commitment to end the use of fossil fuels, rising tides threaten to inundate major coastal cities and create even more



extreme weather patterns.

Extinction Rebellion's direct actions involve support for radical reforms and hope that blocking traffic and bringing cities to a standstill will force the rulers to embark on policies that address climate change with the energy necessary to forestall the looming catastrophe.

Within their model is an appeal to major corporations to recognize that sustainable energy and sensible production will benefit them fi-

nancially. This is undoubtedly driven not so much by a desire to support capitalist solutions, as it is a realization that corporations wield the ultimate power worldwide and it is unlikely that popular decision making can be instituted in time to save the planet. No critique of the industrial system itself is offered; only how it is powered.

Hong Kong, ten years ago, was considered a model city with inhabitants who were, for the most part, politically passive. But in early 2019, the great majority of the population began reacting in anger against a proposed law permitting extradition of individuals to mainland China. Coming as it did after the kidnapping and jailing of dissident publishers on the mainland and the harsh sentencing of activists of the 2014 "Umbrella Protests," the bill was correctly perceived as a threat to basic rights and freedom.

Starting last June, there followed months of mostly spontaneous mass demonstrations with participation numbering consistently in the tens to hundreds of thousands. Although their demands seem rather mild, on the practical level they focus on maintaining to what the Hong Kong population has become accustomed, free from Chinese interference.

But perhaps on a deeper level there is something much different going on. That so many people are involved in a culture of resistance bespeaks of a desire for more moments of authentic joy anchored in human solidarity, something that can't be manufactured by the glitter of a consumer society.

Almost daily, downtown Hong Kong is transformed into what Hakim Bey calls a "temporary autonomous zone," a place where a new world can be imagined and built.

The corruption and economic deprivations experienced from Beirut to Santiago to Paris are real, but there may be a deeper driver of what appears to be only radical reformism on the surface: a desire for a different world in which the solidarity and excitement of the streets can come to define all of life.

Paul Walker is a long time friend of the Fifth Estate who lives in the Detroit area.

PEN PALS

JESSAMINE O'CONNOR

Friends for fifteen years
and never met.

She sends letters across the Atlantic,
then the span of land from east to west
and into the front gates
to be rifled through,
security checked and sometimes rejected,
wheeled along corridors
and doors made of bars,
until reaching
his cell.

It's always the same time
so every morning he half-waits
half-hopefully
and occasionally is rewarded.

He reads the letters over and over,
replies in the evening
on thin lined paper,
and the next one
and the next, scrawling, animated,
asking to hear more about her life
without walls,
tells her he lives vicariously
through her eyes and words,
and in turn writes his young story across the paper,
drawings, lyrics, politics,
freedom,
dreams

like her own but his are condensing,
hardening, cracking
under the weight of concrete and locks.
He transmits energy from his bunk,
back through the walls and across the states,
over the waves, the country roads
and into her letterbox
in the middle of nowhere
where she lives alone
with her children.

His bright yellow letters light up their house
like paper lanterns.

Jessamine O'Connor lives in the west of Ireland. She facilitates The Hermit Collective arts troupe, and coordinates free English classes for immigrants. A new collection of poems, *Silver Spoon* from Salmon Poetry, will appear in 2020. JessamineOConnor.com



Philippine anarchist anti-electoral activity during the 2016 election.

Call of Duterte

Western Reporting on the Philippines' Totalitarian Drift

TOM SYKES

“One hates to see Los Angeles go up in flames unless one’s got a camera running,” joked the British anarchist comedian Peter Cook after the 1992 LA riots. A variation on this idea applies to Western state-corporate media, which seldom covers the non-Western world unless it is gripped by disaster.

This is true of the Philippines today and its vicious president, Rodrigo Duterte, whose rule is characterized by a frenzied cocktail of leftish-style populism, state authoritarianism, cynical nationalism, toxic masculinity and, most appalling of all, the government-orchestrated mass-murder of drug abusers and traffickers.

The chaotic and contradictory nature of the Duterte regime is matched by confusion, hypocrisy, and inaccuracy in its coverage by British and American mainstream journalists on all points of a narrow political spectrum (conservative at one extreme through to left-liberal on the other) that is delimited by market pressures and the ideological assumptions of both mega-rich proprietors and the journalists themselves.

The result is that most so-called journals of record in the West offer partial, unreliable explanations for how Duterte’s Philippines came to be, and their vocabulary is bereft of important phenomena such as neoliberalism, US imperialism and Western ethnocentrism.

In his recent book *Duterte Harry*, British reporter Jonathan Miller suggests

that poverty and inequality played a role in the public discontent that put Duterte in power in 2016. But Miller’s predilection for a global trade system that benefits Western nations at the expense of the poor world, blinkers him to what is a major material determinant of *Dutertismo*.

According to the Filipino globalization theorist, Walden Bello, in the last quarter of the 20th century, the US-run World Bank and IMF condemned the Philippines to acute debt and massive poverty by imposing free-market land, trade, industry, and spending policies.

The country was soon lagging behind most of its neighbors with regard to poverty reduction and annual average growth rate. The debt burden resulted in severe under-investment in infrastructure and public services. Alienated from this set-up, millions of Filipinos voted for Duterte’s phony populism.

Most Western commentators are shocked by the rise of Duterte, unprecedented is a favored adjective, but they would not be if they were more historically aware. As the Filipina cultural theorist Neferti X.M. Tadiar observes, self-interested Western policy towards the Third World in the late 20th century laid the groundwork for politicians of Duterte’s strain.

She writes, “The rise of a ‘strongman’ regime was a World Bank-endorsed response to the growing and intensifying crises felt in the nation as a result of the political and economic system installed by US colonization being pushed to its limits by the acceleration of global capital.”

A different flavor of hypocrisy informs *The Guardian*’s Tom Smith when he argues sloppily that Duterte is “more of a threat to the world” than Donald Trump. Although Duterte has slaughtered perhaps 30,000 Filipinos, he is incapable of attacking people beyond his own borders, whereas US military actions and embargoes in the Middle East alone since 1990 have resulted in the deaths of millions.

While the *Financial Times*’ Michael

Peel asserts that another reason for Duterte's ascent is his "mining of a seam of anti-US sentiment," Peel avoids addressing the roots of such sentiment. Similarly, when Miller cites a "short war in 1898" that led to the US colonization of the Philippines for almost half a century, he neglects to mention that this war involved a grisly racist genocide of up to 1.4 million Filipinos.

The Filipino historian, E. San Juan, Jr. notes continuities between these late Victorian US aggressions and its present-day "counter-insurgency manoeuvres" against both Islamist and leftist rebels in the nation's archipelago. "US troops are 'recolonizing' the Philippines," he writes, to "preserve its eroded world hegemony" post-Cold War and post-9/11.

When making comparisons with the recent past, these Western writers gloss over the illiberal misdemeanors of Duterte's predecessors, so long as they were nominally economically and politically liberal – as in Tom Smith's baffling proposition that Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (president from 2001-10) is a "good role model" for the progressive resistance to Duterte.

This ignores the fact that Arroyo's administration heavily censored the press, imposed a state of emergency (a limited form of martial law) and was responsible for the extra-judicial killings of over 1,000 and the torture of 1,000 more.

Furthermore, Smith's inclusion of Arroyo in a clique of "strong" elite Filipina politicians whom he hopes will "combat the macho autocrat" Duterte, smacks of a problematic identity politics that is another symptom of the (neo)liberal malaise. Societies so damaged by the local and global historical forces explained above cannot be quick-fixed by a few more women entering leadership positions, especially if these women's politics hardly differ from those of the men now in charge. But to labor under the illusion that such reforms will rescue the day excuses Smith et al from, once again, admitting that the deeper causes of the crisis are related to their own ideological dogmas.

Given the Western media's antipathy to Duterte, you might think it would be keen to report on the popular struggle against him, but it is not. One reason is the moth-eaten Orientalist prejudice about Asians being unable to enact positive social change by themselves. However, there have been thousands of grass-roots protests against the drug war and Duterte's other blunders.

Anarchists, though they are outnumbered by Maoists, democratic socialists and social democrats, have played a role in these events. Groups such as Safehouse and Onsite are taking practical collective action in their deprived communities to address everything from local political corruption to the lack of green spaces for growing vegetables.



Filipino Food Not Bombs volunteers Chris Jose Eleazar and Jan Ray Patindol were tortured and killed during a raid on the home of a FNB volunteer in September 2018. The police claim that they "fought back." Friends said the two did not resist and when they saw the dead bodies there were indications the two young men were tortured before being killed.

In July 2018, two other FNB Volunteers, Jessie Villanueva De Guzman and Patrick Paul Pile were killed.

The Filipino wing of the autonomous, nonviolent cooperative, Food Not Bombs, have been so vociferous in their opposition to state oppression that four of their members were sadly murdered by police last year under the fake pretext of the anti-narcotics clampdown.

Such self-managed and anti-authoritarian activism is nothing new in Philippine political history; the Revolution of 1896 depended upon a "dense intertwining of anarchist internationalism and radical anti-colonialism," as historian Benedict Anderson wrote.

Ultimately, Western media misrepresentations of the Philippines demonstrate a centrist, neoliberal world-view in crisis; though they castigate the Duterte regime for its aberrant brutality – and brutal it certainly is – they deny Western responsibility for this totalitarian drift in Philippine politics. They overlook any resistance to this new status quo that stands outside the party political process.

Nor do these establishmentarian pundits accept that their own ideology, despite its ostensible support of human rights and "rules-based" international relations, has, as Indian novelist Pankaj Mishra puts it, been an "incubator" for "authoritarianisms" and advocated for "the occupation and subjugation of other people's territory and culture [as] a wonderful instrument of civilization."

Tom Sykes is the author of *The Realm of the Punisher: Travels in Duterte's Philippines* (Signal Books). He teaches creative writing at the School of Film, Media and Communication, at the University of Portsmouth, UK.

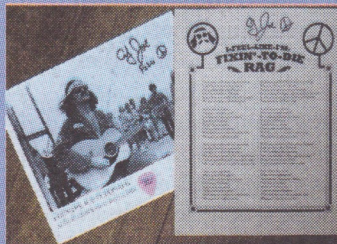
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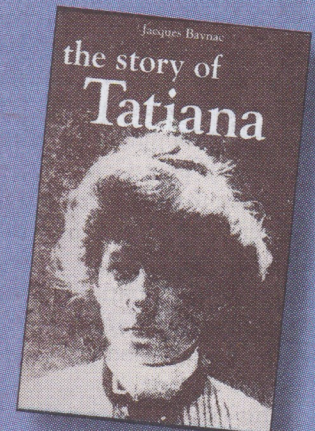
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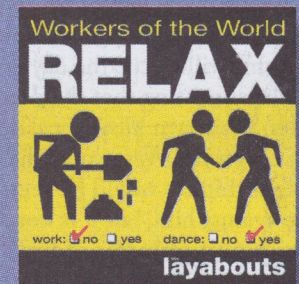
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